



ONENESS WITH GOD

BY MINOCHER K. SPENCER

They who unto others show the Ways of Truth
Which lead to happiness in this life and in the
Next,
Who prove Thine Omnipresence,—that e'en
Thou art on Earth
As in Thy Heav'n,—such, will of Joys of both
the Worlds
Reap better than the Good,—nay, Best' for
they are truly
Increasors of the World's Joy ! Thy friends !
AND ONE WITH THEE !
(*Gatha Ushtavad*, ha 43, Stanza 3.)



Rishi Ram Ram

ONENESS WITH GOD

By Minocher K. Spencer

Second Revised Edition

COIMBATORE
THE SPIRITUAL HEALING CENTRE
RAJA STREET

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Soviet Russia *Its Socialism*
The Other World

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To
Jamshed Nussorwanji
A true Karmayogin,
With Love and
Gratitude

PREFACE

There is tumult and discord everywhere to day and it may appear that the world instead of progressing is retrogressing. If we human beings understood the purpose of life and the significance of God a plan, this earth would be a heaven. An attempt is made in this book to remove the wrong notions and to reiterate with emphasis the old truths, which all religions which are alike in their essential teachings have announced and pronounced at various stages of human evolution. Many messages received at the Spiritual Healing Centre, at Coimbatore, particularly from its Spirit Guide, Rishi Ram Ram indicate that the world is progressing towards unity, political, social, economical and religious, and that it is now only a question of a few years or decades when this millennium will be achieved. The present conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India is only a transitory phenomenon and the cloud must soon pass away.

This book was first published in Karachi and very grateful thanks are due to Mr K S. Doraswami Iyer, the indefatigable secretary of the Spiritual Healing Centre, Coimbatore for bringing out this second edition. A true friend a man of God, he is the soul of the Centre. Thanks are also due to Mr K S Sivaraman Madras, for devoting so much of his precious time on reading the proofs and looking after the whole job.

Karachi

3th NOVEMBER, 1946

M K SPENCER.

FOREWORD

"The One becomes Many under the creative impulse. The Many surge back and subside in the One in the course of a long evolution. Creation and Evolution are mere different aspects of change. The man of wisdom steadily sees the One amidst the Many. Change is often merely apparent. Just as the birth pangs are followed by the appearance of a new baby, the death pangs are followed by the appearance of a new astral babe. There is never any mere destruction in the universe. Follow in thought and concept these changes which point the way to the goal."

RISHI RAM RAM

(The above message was given by Rishi Ram Ram, the Spirit Guide of the Spiritual Healing Centre, Coimbatore, on 13th December 1943, at 7-30 P M., when he was invoked after prayers to give his blessings and a foreword to this book)

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A PRAYER

O God, thou art the Lord of the universe. The sun and the stars, the planets and the revolving sky are thy creation. Thou art ageless. Thou art without beginning, without end. Thy power is supreme. Thy wisdom is matchless. Thou art the fountain of Love and Mercy. All things change in life, but thou art changeless and formless. Eternal, Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Invisible, Indescribable, thou art Absolute Spirit. Thou art the idol of my heart, the vision of my mind, the sanctuary of my soul, the matrix of my spirit.

I live in thee. It is thy light that brings me joy in life. It is thy light that dispels all gloom and darkness. It is thy love that makes me love all on earth, whether men or beasts or birds. It is thy perfection that guides me like a lode-star, in the stormy sea of life and makes my mind a reflex of thy equanimity.

I crave union with thee, O Lord !

INTRODUCTION

RELIGION is a matter of the heart. The dominance of intellect is the hallmark of Western civilization. Swami Vivekananda speaking to an American audience, once said: It is one of the evils of your Western civilization that you are after intellectual education alone. You give this education but you take no care of the heart. It makes man ten times more selfish and that will be your destruction.

The sense dominated man has lost the finer perception and yearning of the heart for God which formed the main teaching in ancient India. The present war is nothing but a result of the dominance of the head over the heart, the inequilibrium between the two. To the scientist who believes in measuring and tabulating matter, what is a tear? It is only a composition of phosphate of lime, chloride of soda, some mucus and some water. It does not occur to him that a tear is an expression of a weeping heart.

As we cast our eyes around us what do we find? God gave us Buddha to enlighten us, not to make lamp shades out of him. God gave us Christ but we have made churches out of him. God created man so that he may become perfect and go back to Him. God gave us the sun, the moon and the stars but we have made such a night of despair that our homes are prison houses, our religions are a mockery, our governments are bankrupt. We have made such a terrible mess of life that instead of bloom and light we find gloom and darkness. The eyes are dimmed with tears. There is a veil of sorrow, misery

and fear. Greed of money and land, misunderstandings and selfish cunningness have made men and nations go backward. Without the voice of faith, without the sterling note of love, without the memory of God, who is the only Reality, how can the mind be inspired and the tears changed into smiles? There is no death. Man's destiny is immortality. 'Light, more light,' is the anguished cry of the world. When Goethe was dying he cried out, "Open the windows. Light, more Light!" More suffering is caused by mental sickness than by physical ailment.

It must be admitted, however, that a study of comparative religions in the last few decades has done immense good. It has removed jealousy and intolerance, the prolific cause of the fanatic wars in the past. The spirit of aloofness and exclusive superiority is giving way. It is being recognised that there is a lot of common ground in the teachings of the various prophets of the world. Each religion is trying to understand the other. There is a growing feeling of love and harmony. Man is entering the domain of scientific enquiry. Spiritualism has exhaustively proved the existence of the World Hereafter. It has taught us of That Immanent Presence which is God. The greatest service it has rendered is that it has spiritualised science and tried to re-instate religion in its pristine purity. If the teachings of spiritual philosophy are accepted and acted upon by the majority of mankind, we should soon be able to say that we are now at the threshold of a new-epoch, which promises a happy blending of life into a harmonious whole, when wars shall cease, when man's brutality shall be an anachronism, when inequities and injustices shall fade away and instead there shall prevail the Rule of the Righteous for the happiness of all mankind.

We have tried to explain in these pages the significance of God and the methods of approaching Him making a comparative study of the principal teachings of the great religions and philosophies the systems of *yoga* with a view to finding a common basis of acceptance for the perfection of the human soul in the evolution of life

There is in human life not as much of a struggle for existence as for happiness. The soul longs for happiness. And it is the wish of God that man should be happy. But pleasures do not give happiness. It is a mistaken notion that there is happiness in the satisfaction of the senses. The drunkard the gambler and the profligate are the most miserable beings on the surface of the earth. Arrogance of wealth and pride of power take men away from God. The end of life is God. He dwells in the human heart and the way to realize Him is through purity duty unselfish service devotion knowledge prayer and meditation. It is only when we drop our selfishness and think in terms of thine and not mine that we shall be ready to get the divine perception and feel the unity of life and **ONE NESS WITH GOD** which is the theme of this book.

When we are bent upon some important mission which requires the expending of every ounce of our mental moral and spiritual strength an awareness of God comes upon us with greater force and rapidity. We realize then that we are not alone that there is some Intelligence that is co operating with us and we feel inwardly strengthened in the faith of that Divine Union. Admiral R. E. Byrd in his book *Alone* tells us how when he was stationed at the Advance Base which was the nearest point leading to the South Pole he had to spend about seventy days absolutely alone in the wilderness of

the frozen ice His concern was to locate the site of the South Pole There was not a soul to whom he could talk At one time he thought that he was passing away He took a piece of paper and wrote down his impressions which were as under

The universe is not dead Therefore there is an Intelligence there and it is all pervading At least the purpose possibly the major purpose of that Intelligence is the achievement of universal harmony

Striving in the right direction for Peace (Harmony) therefore as well as the achievement of it, is the result of accord with that Intelligence

It is desirable to effect that accord

* The human race then is not alone in the Universe Though I am cut off from human beings I am not alone For untold ages man has felt an awareness of that Intelligence Belief in It is the one point where all religions agree It has been called by many names Many call it God

We are inseparably related to God He is immanent in nature He is a living Force Without the sense of the living God there can be no unity The ONENESS OF LIFE is the common theme of all religions It is the chief teaching of philosophy It is the theme of this book.

The author is painfully aware of his limitations and want of attainments But if this book in spite of its many imperfections helps in focusing man's thought upon the most fundamental point *viz* , the Reality of Life it will not have been written in vain It is high time that the universities all over the world brought the Scriptures of

all the religions under one cover and made it a university text-book. Theosophists and others have done pioneering work in the field of comparative study of religions and the universities must now play the role of instilling the common truths of all religions in the hearts and minds of the youths of all nationalities for achieving the common goal of Universal Brotherhood.

The author's warmest gratitude and most reverential acknowledgment are due to Rishi Ram Ram for his inspirational guidance throughout the writing of this book and for his short but thought provoking Foreword.

The writer takes this opportunity also to express his indebtedness to a silent friend of his in Bombay, who refuses to disclose his identity. But for his invaluable assistance and collaboration at every stage of the manuscript, this work might not have been completed. All honour to this silent, great friend.

The author also expresses his warmest gratitude to brother Gurdial Malliek for rendering assistance in many ways, especially in reading the manuscript suggesting various changes and correcting the proofs.

If the inclusion of too many quotations is tiring to the reader, it is sincerely hoped that it would be realized that such incorporation to substantiate **ONENESS WITH GOD** was but inevitable

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS GOD

WHAT is God? Is there a God? Can any one see God? Is God within man or outside him? What is universe? These are questions that have exercised the mind of man from the remotest past.

The Vedanta philosophy of the ancient *Rishis* of India throws considerable light on the conception of God. The various differences that we see in the world and the universe are only differences of "time, space and causality."

If we remove the "names and forms" (*nama* and *rupa*) we come to a certain common unity and this underlying essence is God. The universe is a unit. God manifests Himself in different forms and names. When I see a tree, a table or a chair in their material forms and with different designations given to them, they appear to me, as a tree, a table and chair. But if I can visualize them minus their names and forms, I arrive at something, which is common in all things in the entire universe. This common element, the infiniteness of which is beyond human comprehension, is God. He is Timeless, Causeless, Formless, the Absolute Spirit governing nature and pervading throughout the universe from the glow worm in the glen to the star twinkling in the skies.

Swami Vivekananda says "There is but one Unit Existence and that one is appearing as manifold. This Self or Soul or Substance is all that exists in the universe. That Self or Substance or Soul is, in the language of

non dualism, the *Brahman*, appearing to be manifold by the interposition of name and form. Look at the waves in the sea. Not one wave is different from the sea, but what makes the wave apparently differ? Name and form, the form of the wave and the name which we give to 'wave.' That is what makes it differ from the sea. When name and form go, it is the same sea. Who can make any difference between the wave and the sea? So this whole universe is that one Unit Existence name and form have created all these various differences."

Shankaracharya in order to illustrate the oneness of God and universe takes the analogy of foam and water. 'Just as foam which before the separate manifestation of its name, form from that of water was capable of being denoted only by the word 'water' but when it becomes manifested by its difference of form and name from that of water, the same substance water, is denoted by more than one word; i.e., 'water' and 'foam' and foam is denoted by one word 'foam'." (Shri Shankara's *Commentary of the Upanishads*—Page 18)

If we then brush off from our mind the differences of name and form, God can be perceived in everything. He is the inner essence of everything in the universe and pervades throughout nature. We know the story of Uddalaka, who gave a handful of salt and asked his son to throw it into the water. The boy was asked to bring back the salt. He could not do it. He was then told to taste the water from the top from the middle and from the bottom and the boy said that it tasted saltish. The story has a moral. Just as salt mixed with water cannot be seen but pervades it, God the universal soul pervades the universe. God is an essence and to understand Him, truth has to be realized by transcending the limitations

of the senses " We have to go beyond matter. It is by contemplation and meditation that God is realized

God is not matter, but whatever is real in matter, is God. He is spirit. The material phenomena are not real. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'What is real is but the finer—the gross is simply appearance.' It is man's duty to investigate into the finer matter. Religion helps us in understanding the Infinite.

'What is it that makes a worm crawling on the earth greater than the fastest and fiercest looking locomotive? It has life *prana*, which the locomotive has not. In life there is a struggle for freedom and God is the highest embodiment of freedom. To know man is to know God. To know God is to know man.' We cannot philosophise about God. But we get in these two pithy sentences the essence of the whole conception of God. Man is a spark of God, who pervades the universe and the union of man with God is the highest realization—the highest bliss. Said Jesus: 'I and my Father are one.' 'Father just as I am one with You, so make them all one with me.' In essence we are all one with God.

Atheism is the denial of the existence or the knowability of God. Bacon says in his *Advancement of Learning*, that shallow learning tends to atheism but a deeper study makes a man return to God. Man is not a bundle of 'organised dust' or 'a stalking machine' as rationalists and agnostics make us believe. Even in the olden times, when religion was still not much in existence in Greece and Rome we find in Greek and Roman philosophy the belief in the everlasting existence and goodness of God. Plato defines God as the highest object of knowledge and love, the source of all being, cognoscibility, truth, excellence and beauty—the One, the Good. Aristotle's

definition is still more magnificent and elaborate. He called God, "without plurality and without parts, free from matter, contingency, change and development, the eternal, unmoved mover, whose essence is pure energy; absolute spirit, self thinking reason, the one perfect being whose life is completely blessed—whose likeness is the goal towards which the whole universe tends."

God is the centre of the universe. He is the life of the mind, the life of the soul, the life of the universe. He is the eternal centre towards which all things converge. He is Eternity. A sophist asked a sage, 'What is the oldest of all things?' and he replied, 'God, because He has always existed.' And when he was again asked, 'What is the most beautiful of all things?' The sage replied, 'The universe, because it is the work of God.'

It is only by the eyes of faith that the living God can be perceived. The existence of God is not a mere conception or a logical conclusion. He is a living presence, Who can be seen with the mind's eye. Who can be heard with the promptings of the soul-conscience, Who can be felt by that inward urge in man when he seeks spiritual union with all that is beautiful, grand, harmonious and lovable in nature.

To the mystics the existence of God is not a matter of mere faith. It is a personal experience. There is in the human soul something "unsundered from the Absolute." This something is Reality. This unsundered something in the soul is known by many names. Some call it creative reason. Some call it recollective faculty. But truly speaking it is the divine spark, the inward light, by which the soul seeks union with the Overlord. God is a consciousness transcending all images, all thoughts, all aspirations, all duties. The mystics believe that 'the

universe is the uninterrupted revelation of the divine." God is man's goal to free himself from all anxieties and perturbations of life. The soul thirsts for God. He is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of existence. As Sri Aurobindo says "Brahman is the one besides whom there is nothing else existent." "He is the omnipresent Reality, the truth of all life and existence, whether absolute or relative whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate whether intelligent or unintelligent." (*The Life Divine*—Page 51) The soul yearns for God. Just as a man yearns for the embrace of his beloved, the soul is ravished with the thought of the Absolute. It hungers for union. 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon the earth that I desire but Thee' God is the all embracing unity. Humanity is co-eternal with God.

God is the central theme of all religions. In no philosophy or religion is the conception of God so unique as in the *Vedas*. God is the impersonal Self, the pervading Spirit. Call it what you like, *Atman*, *Paramatman*, *Brahma*. It is Absolute. Immutable, Formless, Changeless. Incorruptible, Eternal. In the Avesta prayers of the Parsis God—*Ahura Mazda*—is remembered by 101 names. According to Christianity God is the Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier. He is Absolute Spirit. Absolute Love, Absolute Good. In fact in all religions the predominant idea we get of God is that He is Absolute Being. Absolute Life. Absolute Spirit. Absolute Intelligence, Absolute Love.

According to the *Vedas* *Atman* is silence. Man has to journey through the 'divine dark', a hard and precipitous way to realize God. He is immanent in nature. When we say God is nothing it is in this sense

that He transcends everything. He is beyond thought and speech. "*Brahman* is myself within me." It is smaller than the kernel of the canary seed. It is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than all the worlds. And yet it is not this. It is not that. It is incomprehensible.

The very idea of God exalts the soul. He is the sole object of all our philosophy. He is love. He is truth. He is Beauty. He is Perfection. He is Knowledge. He is Bliss. He is Purity. He is the loving Father, who loves us all. His children in spite of our wrong ways and imperfections. Who would not bend his head in humble adoration? Who would not kneel in reverential awe and offer his unconditioned and wholehearted devotion? He is nearest to us, for He is the only One Being and oneness means nearness. Oneness of life, oneness of everything—this is God. This is the truest Vedantic teaching. If we can realize that there is no separation between one atom and another, a man and a woman, a star and a planet—that the separation is on the surface but not real—we shall perceive Unity in everything. And when we realize this Unity we can have no delusion regarding this life. We perceive the one—the Self—the Infinite—the *Atman*, the Lord and the Centre.

It should be the aim of our life to perceive God in everything. If we cannot see Him in everything, let us begin by perceiving Him in the thing we love the most and then gradually increase the number of such objects. When a mother starts teaching her child the first lesson she teaches is 'God is Love'. God is not only in holy books and temples. He is also in the slums and streets. He dwells even in sin and sorrow. We must love all without distinction of caste, creed or colour, without

distinction of virtue or shame, for He is in everything He vibrates more quickly than mind He is far, He is near. He is outside He is inside He penetrates and interpenetrates everything How can there be any delusion if we can see this Oneness in the Universe?

'Thou Sun, Who hast covered the Truth with Thy golden disc, do Thou remove the veil, so that I may see the Truth that is within Thee, I have known the Truth that is within Thee, I have known what is the real meaning of Thy rays and Thy glory and have seen That which shines in Thee, the Truth in Thee I see, and That which is within Thee is within me, and I am That.'

There is no separation in nature. Unity is the fundamental concept on which the universe is based and the main purpose of life is not acquisition of property but realization of that feeling of unity, that kinship with all things in nature the bird and the sky, the fish and the lamb, the rose that blooms and throws its fragrance around and the oak that manfully stands against the wrath of storm, the man and the woman, and the Infinite that weaves its mystic thread of embalmed serenity through all its creations Not in possession but in the power of union is the supreme joy and the real purpose of living Life is immense To be immersed in the all-pervading Eternal Spirit is the highest bliss and joy

Robespierre said, 'If there be no God, we must invent one' This very fact shows that, in spite of all the scientific advancements man's achievements can lead him nowhere Man's restlessness his discontent, weariness of flesh, his misery and suffering are his own creation It is only by the knowledge and pursuit of God that man's happiness and freedom can be achieved. For, God alone is Reality

Even by denials and negations we reach the idea of God. For if He is not This, That it means that our limited consciousness fails to understand the infinite possibilities in God. Sri Aurobindo very beautifully expresses this thought in the following passage. When we seek to envisage it (unity in nature) by the mind we are compelled to proceed through an infinite series of conceptions and experiences. And yet in the end we are obliged to neglect our largest conceptions our most comprehensive experiences in order to affirm that the Reality exceeds all definitions. We arrive at the formula of the Indian sages *Nets Nets*. 'It is not this It is not that there is no experience by which we can limit It there is no conception by which It can be defined' (*The Life Divine*—page 52)

God is the creator of the worlds. This conception is prevalent in all the revealed religions of the world. In the *Aitareya Upanishad*, we read (all) this was only one *Atman* at first. There was nothing else active. He thought I shall create worlds. Sri Shankaracharya one of the most brilliant intellectuals of the age has written beautiful commentaries of the *Upanishads* and other Vedic books which are a landmark in the history of theological literature. Commenting upon the above *sloka* he says '*Atman*' is from the root which means to obtain to eat or 'to pervade all'. The *Atman* is the highest omniscient omnipotent devoid of all the attributes of *Samsara* such as hunger etc. naturally eternal pure intelligent and free unborn undecaying immortal fearless and without a second. Just as a juggler creates materials out of apparent nothing the *Atman* created the universe which before manifestation was one with the *Atman* itself.

A beautiful story is related to us by Imam Abu Hanifa. He went one day to the court of the Emperor. The Emperor asked him three questions :

1. Who lived before God?
2. Who lives now beyond God, on the Other Side?
3. What is God doing now?

Abu Hanifa was quick in reply. He asked the Emperor to come down from the throne and he himself sat on it. He then made the Emperor repeat the numbers one to ten backwards. The Emperor began ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three two, one. He then stopped. Hanifa was indignant "Why have you stopped? What is after one?" "There is nothing after one. How can there be anything after one?" replied the Emperor. Hanifa then explained

1. God is One He is without beginning, without end.
2. There is none beyond God.
3. What He is doing at the moment is, that He has made such a powerful emperor as you to come down and He has raised me, a *fakir*, to the throne

The Emperor was silenced and the whole audience was pleased. It wondered at the ready wit and wisdom of the man.

A question was put to a certain philosopher 'What is the nature of God?' He promised to give a reply in three days. At the end of three days, he asked for another three days to think over again. And then another three days and another three days. At last he conceded that the more he thought of God, the more he was lost, as He was so many-sided. "The more I think of Him, the more indescribable He becomes."

A certain school boy asked his school mate "Tell me where God is and I shall give you a mango" The other fellow immediately replied "Tell me where God is not and I shall give you two mangoes"

When Sri Ramakrishna was asked, "Is God Personal or Impersonal?" he replied "He is both and yet He is beyond Beyond any intellectual or theological dogmas, He is manifest in the soul's own inmost realization. He assumes any form for the pleasure of His devotee He is inexpressible He is not to be put between the covers of a book or in the boundary of a temple" He believed that worship of anything that helped one to see God was good—even stones and images All that was needed was an intense longing on the part of a devotee

Newton stated that the law of motion worked in all things on this earth but he doubted whether it worked beyond this earthly sphere also In fact he came to the conclusion that motion ceased to exist beyond this earth. Those who followed Newton showed that such was not the case They indicated and proved that on the contrary, as one travelled to the more distant spheres motion increased with distance, Those stars and planets which were furthestmost from the earth revolved with the greatest velocity But there is one Being alone, that is motionless It is God, *Brahman, Isvara Hormuzd, Jehovah Allah* call Him by whatever name you like

The holy *Koran* opens with this *Surah*

- 1 Praise be to Allah Lord of the Worlds
- 2 The Beneficent the Merciful
- 3 Owner of the Day of Judgment
- 4 Thee (alone) we worship Thee (alone) we ask for help

- 5 Show us the straight path,
- 6 The path of those whom Thou hast favoured,
7. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger,
nor of those who go astray "

The Lord's Prayer in the Bible commences as under

- "1. Our Father which art in heaven,
- 2 Hallowed be Thy name
- 3 Thy kingdom come
4. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- 5 Give us this day our daily bread
- 6 Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us
- 7 Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil."

The *Hormuzd Yesht* of the Parsis mentions the following twenty names of *Ahura Mazda*

- (1) The Eternal, (2) The Protector of Human Beings, (3) The Immanent, (4) The Highest Purity, (5) The Lord of Righteousness, (6) The Centre of Knowledge (7) The All-Knowing, (8) The Omniscient, (9) The Omnipotent (10) The Creator of the Universe, (11) The Bestower of Bliss, (12) The Destroyer of Evil (13) The Everlasting (14) The Invisible (15) The Undefeatable, (16) The Discerner of Good and Evil (17) The All Seeing (18) The Bestower of Health (19) The Creator, (20) The All-Wise

Buddha is accused of 'atheism' But this is not justified It is true that he does not put before his devotees the ideal of a God which we see in other religions Buddhism does not preach of God as the aim and end of man's strivings This is said to be the cause of the absence of true *Bhakti* in Buddha's religion This is the reason why Shankaracharya did not adhere to Buddha a

teaching and threw it off. But it must be remembered that Buddha's silence is that of the mystic. His silence is an eloquent tribute to the Eternal Truth. To him God, the Unutterable, is the Unnameable. When he breaks silence we get a glimpse of "Buddha's God-consciousness". He says in one place "There is, O disciples, a state where there is neither coming nor going, neither death, nor birth. There is, O disciples, the Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. Were there not such a 'One,' there would be no possible exit from the world of the born, originated, created and formed."

The Vedanta teaches that by destruction of Mind, Reason, Will and the Ego, knowledge or consciousness of God can be gained. Mind or *Manas* is the faculty which communicates with the outside world through the doors of the senses. Reason or Intellect sorts as good or bad what *Manas* or Mind collects. The business of the Will is to execute what the Mind and Reason dictate. The Ego *Ahankara* is the lower self in man. It is the sum total of the consciousness of Mind, Reason and Will. We gather impressions from outside, sort them as good or bad, act upon them and then finally express, 'I did this, I did that', and so forth. This capital 'I' is the cause of all the mischief. When *Ahankara* is killed, i.e. when the individual understands that his consciousness is not different from Consciousness or *Pragna* as a whole, *Manas*, Reason and Will lose their false individual colours and the knowledge of God becomes revealed.

It is through illusion that we perceive the real. Indestructible and imperishable God alone exists. He is the only Reality. We are all progressing but God is Perfection in Eternity. He dwells in our heart. He

whispers to us the song of love He gives us strength. He fills our mind with beauty and joy God is the Ideal, the Spirit the Destroyer of Illusion Who will not seek the Wisdom of His Will? Who will not seek union with God?

God dwells in the deepest depth of Silence God knows all He knows the innermost thoughts of our mind He is the very substance of our soul He is accessible He is inaccessible. His law is supreme in the Universe He is all in all

There are two worlds the world of Form and the world of Spirit In the unmanifested form the Absolute is Spirit Matter when manifested It is Spirit and Matter God manifested Himself in order to gain consciousness We need not describe here the working of the Cosmos the five elements ether air fire water, earth together with the significance of their co-relation with the five senses so beautifully described by Mrs. Annie Besant in her book *Kosmos* With the manifestation of God there were brought into being all those evolutionary changes of the mineral vegetable and animal kingdoms culminating into man The mission of man is to rise by stages to Godhood which is his parental home The whole idea of evolution is very pathily expressed by St. Augustine in one sentence God was made man that man might become God

God is invisible but to the one who aspires for Him day and night through the path of rectitude and renunciation He is not invisible

God is remembered by 1 000 names in the Islamic and Hindu scriptures Even then it would be difficult to get a comprehensive idea of the infinite greatness of this Timeless Reality The author of *Indian Philosophy* Sir

S Radhakrishnan, describes God, according to the Vedanta philosophy, in the following very expressive phraseology "*Brahman* is infinite not in the sense that it excludes the finite, but in the sense that it is the ground of all finites. It is eternal not in the sense that it is something back beyond all time, as though there were two states, temporal and eternal, one of which superseded the other, but that it is the Timeless Reality of all things in time. The absolute is neither the infinite nor the finite the self or its realization, the one life or its varied expressions, but is the real, including and transcending the self and its realization, life and its expression. It is the spiritual spring which breaks, blossoms and differentiates itself into numberless finite centres. The word *Brahman* means growth and is suggestive of life, motion and progress and not death, stillness or stagnation. It is self-caused. It is a positive reality, 'Full is that full is this'. It is obvious that the ultimate reality is not thought or force or being exclusively but the living unity of essence and existence, of the ideal and real, of knowledge, love and beauty." (Page 173)

Yes, what is it, that is not God ?

It is not by Reason's way that we can comprehend God. Logic is very useful for our purpose in life. It helps us in making comparison and establishing the relation of one object with another. The scientific method is helpful in the tabulating and classification of matter. In making these distinctions between one object and another we need a perceiver. Without subject there can be no object. But we cannot convert the subject into an object. The *Atman* is the Supreme force, without a second. It is the perceiver. How can the *Atman*, the subject, be made an object of investigation by Reason?

Our logic therefore fails us. God is beyond human comprehension and understanding. God dwells in the cavity of our heart. We can hear His divine voice only in the depth of our silence. Purity and sincerity are the keystones to the understanding of God.

The scriptures of all religions contain *mantras* which are useful in realizing God. But these *mantras* without proper spiritual preparation instead of bringing us nearer to God may do us harm as extreme emotionalism without proper spiritual foundation and practice is bound to be injurious.

God is the centre of our hopes. When we are ill or worried when we are without food or friend when we feel depressed or lonely the yearning to communicate with the Invisible grows more and more in us and we are rewarded. God succours the needy. He hears the wail of the anguished heart. He listens to the piteous cry. He dries the tears of the widow. He fathers the orphan. He consoles the disconsolate. He lightens the load of the unfortunate. The more we think of Him the more we concentrate upon His Omnipotence. Omnipresence and Omniscience the more we are comforted and benefited by His grace. God is Love. God shines when the ego dies.

God is the Centre of Purity. And is it not written in the *Bible*, The pure in heart shall see God? The great Being hidden like heat in every soul is invisible no doubt. Our physical eyes cannot see Him. Our physical ears can not hear Him. But we can behold Him with our spiritual eyes hear Him with our spiritual ears feel Him with our spiritual knowledge. The Buddha did it. Christ did it. Moses did it. Zoroaster did it and

so did Lord Krishna and Muhammad the founders of the religions of the world

Truly speaking we cannot say whether the Absolute Reality 'is one or many sell or not-sell spirit or matter conscious or unconscious' All that can be said is that It is the all embracing and all powerful Reality, which transcends nature and is immanent throughout the universe It is that from which all things arise, that in which all things exist and that to which all things return It is the ultimate Sell of us all (*The Philosophy of the Yoga Vasistha* by B L Atreya page 70)

The *Yoga Vasistha* describes the Absolute Reality in a thousand and one ways It is immanent even in the thousandth part of an atom of ether It is void and yet has all creatures within itself It is the thread that runs through the hearts of all creatures

There is a beautiful story in *Kena Upanishad* (Parts III and IV) which describes in an allegorical manner the omnipotence of God *Brahman* won a victory for the gods over the demons The gods were at once elated, little knowing that it was through *Brahman* that the victory had been won *Brahman* wanted therefore to show them their vanity He appeared before them under the garb of an adorable Spirit The gods said to *Agni* (Fire), O *Jatavedas* (all knower) find out who that adorable Spirit is? *Agni* hastened to the Spirit The Spirit inquired of *Agni* and he proudly replied Verily I am *Agni* the omniscient!

What power resides in such as you are? asked the Spirit Why I can burn up everything whatever there is on earth replied *Agni*

The Spirit drew out a straw and put it before *Agni* 'Burn this straw will you? *Agni* made a frantic

attempt but he could not even touch it. He was crest-fallen and returned to his colleagues disappointed and disheartened.

Then the gods decided to depute *Vayu* (Wind) on the same errand. The Spirit asked him who he was and he replied, 'Verily, I am *Vayu* the king of the air.'

"What power resides in such as you are," asked the Spirit. "Why, I can blow everything that is on earth," replied *Vayu* quite arrogantly.

The Spirit held out to him a straw and said, "Blow that away, will you?" *Vayu* dashed at it but was unable to move it. He returned dismayed to the gods and said, "I can't find out who that adorable Spirit is."

Then the gods deputed their own king *Indra* to solve this mystery. "O *Maghavan* find out who that adorable Spirit is."

He assented and hastened to the Spirit but the Spirit did not even condescend to speak to him. It disappeared. *Indra*, the proud king of the gods, was sorely hurt and humiliated. But it taught him a good lesson. He realized that the victory of the gods was not the outcome of their prowess. It was the work of *Brahman*.

God's Omnipotence is manifested not only in the work of creation but also in destruction. He is both a creator and a destroyer. When destruction is caused by fires and floods, cyclones and earth-quakes, famines and pestilences a cynic may well ask, "If God is love, why are there such terrible visitations? Are these cataclysms and catastrophes mere natural phenomena or the gruesome pastime of a cruel and avenging Spirit?" To doubt the goodness of God is an infamy. He works order through chaos. In God's plan of evolution these catastrophes are the necessary steps for human progress.

They are the means to awaken the spirit. They pave the way for life's fruition. Calamities are like Faith tonics. They are not God's punishments. God makes Himself manifest in things dreadful, as well as pleasant in order to teach mankind the essential unity of the universe. Sorrows and struggles are the avenues to the realization of God. We shall speak of this realization in the following chapters.

We have made an attempt in this first chapter to convey to the reader some notion of the Reality. But to describe God, Who is indescribable, is futile. To ascribe attributes to Him, Who is Infinite, is to make Him finite. We reiterate, God is indescribable. He transcends human thought and speech.

Salutations be to Thee, God! Thou art the *Anima Mundi*, the Soul of the World, the Life-Breath of the universe. Thou art the Personal God. Thou art the Impersonal Absolute *Brahman*, Eternal, Infinite, Boundless, Spaceless, Timeless, Causeless. Thou art the Creator, the Motionless Spectator. Thou art the Unsurpassed *Ahura Mazda*, the Lord of the *Ameshaspants*, the King of Cherubins, Seraphs, Thrones and Principalities and all the heavenly hosts, who are created by Thee to watch us, guard us and guide us, in the path of Beatitude and Rectitude. Visible or Invisible, Manifest or Unmanifest, Thou dwellest in the cave of every human heart. Thy first word to us was Righteousness and we worship Thee. Thou art the Light of Lights, the Perceiver of all things, the Spirit, that is Immanent in nature and pervades through all Space and Time. Thou art the Victor, the Ruler, the Master, the Fashioner, the Designer, the Preserver, the Destroyer, the Restorer, the Redeemer, the Hearer, the Healer, the Inspirer, the Teacher, the Guide. Thou art the Supreme Self, the Overlord, the

expression "cultural attainments" as culture is a most necessary ingredient in the realization of God. Of course, God cannot be realized by intellect. He is beyond reason and logic. But to realize Him, who is Spirit pervading the universe, a finer perception is necessary. Culture gives us this finer perception. Without finer perception, life is useless, tasteless, of no account and purpose. Unless the dross side of life is completely dropped the opportunity to serve God and respond to the vibrations of the Higher Spirit can never be gained.

Humility is the first plank in the bridge between man and the Immortal Spirit. Just as a tree, that is laden with fruit, bows low to the ground, the man of true wisdom is humble and unaware of his own worth and merit. He thinks himself to be like a drop of water or a grain of sand. The second plank is Patience. Patience is the mother of virtues. It requires a philosopher's mind to tread the path firmly and diligently when the road is steep and rocky and is covered with dark clouds. Earnest Labour is the brother-in-arm of Patience. Bhishma, the embodiment of *Dharma*, says: "Exertion is greater than Destiny." Humility, Patience and Exertion are not enough. Without achieving the knowledge of the soul the knowledge of God is impossible. And the fundamental means of gaining access to this consciousness is purity of mind, body and soul. This purity of heart, which is the most important factor in God-consciousness, becomes vital of purpose only when it is stripped of all attachments to the body. Desires have to be sublimated. The sentimental luggage is an impediment to the pilgrim on his pilgrimage to God. He has to rise above desires. God-consciousness comes when the senses are transcended.

To give up self means to understand and realize the unity in life and nature. When we think of self, and not of others, we imprison and isolate ourselves. Pride and arrogance, wealth and riches, name and fame are mere toys and tinsels, which may give momentary joy but they cut at the very root of true happiness. Anything that is not shared with others, anything that has the tinge of separateness, anything that discards the threads of common love for all humanity, anything that seeks to defy the great moral law, it is non-realization but not extinction of God. For, God is there even in the worst man, be he a murderer or a villain. The pleasures of the senses have to be subjugated, the individual will has to be submitted to the sovereignty of the Universal Will. It is only then that we can feel divine consciousness.

If we share our pains and joys with others, the weight is much reduced and we get the true perception of that universal feeling which knows no shadow of darkness. If we carry a pitcher of water, all ourselves, for ourselves, it acts as a weight. But if we immerse ourselves in the ocean and allow thousands of pitchers of water to overflow us it does not act as a weight. If we substitute 'Thee' and 'Thine' for 'Me' and 'Mine' we get the whole philosophy of life's purpose. There is no pain, no sorrow which cannot be transmuted into joy and goodness if the heart is pure and mind unmolested with thoughts of evil. In fact purity and selflessness are the greatest pillars of the effulgent house of the soul.

The Avesta prayer of Ashem Vohu says

*Ashem Vohu Vahisnem Asti, Usta Asti, Usta Ahmai,
Aijet Ashai, Vahistai Ashem "*

' Purity is the greatest blessing. He is happy who does good for the sake of good and not in the expectation that he may be rewarded '

Religion is a fact. It is nothing but analyzation and realization of the soul within us. If we understand it, we understand religion and God. No amount of teaching of books or empty prayers in the church temple mosque or synagogue will make a man religious or God conscious. As Swami Vivekananda says, ' Religion is not in books or temples. It is an actual perception. Only the man who has actually perceived God and soul has religion '. A man may be a good scholar well versed in the scriptures but there is very little of religion in him if he has not perceived God or his soul. " Religion is not a creed but an experiment, a process of being and becoming '.

It is easier to talk of the Sermon on the Mount and to preach its significance. But only he who has realized its truth in his own heart can be said to have realized God. An atheist may be a better man than a *Pandit* a *Mulla* or a *Padri*. It is only by discarding *Avidya* ignorance and entering into the true spirit of understanding that our soul evolves and we see the beauty and glory of God. God love is the impulse for perfection. It is the search after Truth. It is the urge for unmixed bliss. It is the aspiration for immortality. God is Light Freedom Immortality.

Is this perfection attained by an individual through his own individual efforts or is it the result of general evolutionary progression? Our reply is both. Each man that strives hard to realize God seeks not only his own emancipation but he sets an example to many. They follow in his footsteps.

The human and the divine are inseparately related. Sri Ramakrishna's life is a most beautiful illustration of this grand conception. Not a learned scholar, he lived the life of religion. He resuscitated religion. A plain, simple man, he lived the life of renunciation and deep piety. He made contacts with the Infinite. It was his deep spirituality that made him a unique figure. He has left behind an everlasting memory. There are hundreds of Ramakrishna *Maths* to day, not only in India, where he lived and spent his life, but in Burma, Malaya and other places. Swami Vivekananda said of this God-intoxicated man, 'The books are theories; he was the realization.' This man had in fifty-one years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life and so raised himself to be an object lesson for future generations.

India is particularly a land of saints and seers, though it has fallen in many respects from the ancient traditions and glory. Where can we have a Gandhi but in India? The life of Gandhi is supremely a life of God-realization. His great services, his great sacrifices, his purity, his renunciation, his teaching of the doctrine of *Ahimsa*, his Himalayan effort to spiritualize the dirty waters of politics—these make Gandhi a unique figure in the history of Modern India. It should not be wondered if after his death he is remembered as an *Avatar*. He is a second Christ on earth, a politician in a sense, but at best a saint to whom the liberation of his country is an urge of the soul.

God-realization can only come to him in whom there is the burning desire to renounce everything in the service of God. It is this which alone can lead to a better shaping of the world.



SRI RAMAKRISHNA

God-realization does not come to man soon. Sometimes great sorrows turn man to God but that realization is a temporary phase and as soon as the sorrows are over, he once more enters on the path of *Maya*.

It is only when we rise, step by step, firmly convinced of the great destiny that awaits us, the great Spirit that pervades the entire universe, the great Beatitude that is our reward, when we hunger for it and strive for it, does the evolutionary process take a firm hold.

When Swami Vivekananda came into contact with his master, Sri Ramakrishna, he did not accept all his teachings. He refused the teachings of the *Advaita* philosophy that there was nothing in the universe but God. In fact when his master was all serious, he would laugh and mock and say, how can this jug be God this plate be God this mug be God? Jugs and mugs and men are not same. But as time passed he saw the truth of the *Advaita* philosophy. The *Life of Swami Vivekananda* gives a beautiful portrait of the great change in the mind of Vivekananda in the following passage 'Little by little Naren (i.e. Vivekananda) was led from doubt to beatitude, from darkness to light, from the anguish of the mind to the certainty of bliss, from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of Universal Oneness. He was taken little by little and by the power of Sri Ramakrishna out of bondage into infinite freedom from the pale of a little learning into that omniscience which is the consciousness of Brahman. He was lifted out of all objective conceptions of the Godhead into the glorious awareness of the subjective nature of the True Being above form, above thought, above sense above all relative good and evil into the sameness and Reality and the absolute

beyondness of Brahman." (*Life of Swami Vivekananda* Vol I, page 80)

God realization is *Vidya*, *Maya* is *Avidya*. The infinite misery that we see in life, the chaos of passions, hatreds and strifes poverty, hunger disease and desolation,—they are the seeds and creations of the human mind. It is only when the mind understands through *Jnana* its oneness with the *Atman* can the world be saved from the vortex of suffering. It is this ignorance, this *Avidya* which is the cause of all the ills the human flesh is heir to. The ignorance of mind as to its own nature can only be removed by *Jnana* or wisdom.

This world is a tree of *Maya*. It is watered by man's cravings. The senses are its hollows its leaves and twigs are sense objects. Its fruits are pain and pleasure. It appears real huge and eternal but in reality, it is a shadow of a Higher World.

A certain king held a big festival in the royal gardens and declared that he would hide himself and would like to be discovered by his subjects. The people came in large numbers. There were so many kinds of enjoyment. They were so lost in them that they forgot all about the king. But there was a *fakir* in that throng. He was not carried away by the attractions of the place. He made his way through the pleasure hunting crowd and went straight to the king's palace and entered into the throne room where he was sitting, as usual but quite unnoticed and deserted by his pleasure-loving people.

The sense pleasures keep man away from God-realization. The senses are dominated by the mind. The mind is subject to will. If the mind be curbed and the will trained to submit itself to the Universal Will it is only then that the Reality can be perceived.

The following story illustrates how we run after things that are unreal. A certain man had trained himself to grunt like a pig. He would go from place to place and his grunting was applauded by foolish crowds. A sage, passing by, wondered at this. With a view to dissuading people from such a stupid thing, he erected another *pandal*, by the side of the pig grunter and offered to entertain people with pig grunting of a better sort without any admission fee. The people rushed in but when they saw a real pig-grunting, they left the *pandal*, for there was nothing wonderful in a pig grunting and went to the other *pandal* of the "man pig". Then the sage said, "Here is a splendid lesson for us. Men seldom care for reality but always go in for unreality. That is why the world exists, which is a mere imitation, a reflection in the distorting mirror of *Maya*, of the great *Atman*. No external help is required to see the Self, but very few want It and even if you eagerly advertise It, none will go to you except those who love Truth for Truth's sake. Reflect on this." (*Rambles In Vedanta* by B R Rajam Aiyar, page 408)

To realize God is to rise above *Maya*. Is this world a delusion? Is it real or unreal? As we see it, by our senses, it is real. But the mind that perceives it is itself limited by the factors of time, space and causation. The world is therefore really not what it appears to be to the sense-dominated man. Knowledge is of two kinds—external and internal. Science has played a most important role in conquering nature and increasing the comforts of life. The struggle for external and internal freedom is the keystone of man's life. The internal knowledge is of greater value. It is when we seek within that we open the flood gates of light. It is only then that it dawns on us, that this world is a shadow of the

Other World which is real. Spiritualism has proved the existence of the World Hereafter. The religions of the world are an attempt to take us beyond the scope of physical vision and knowledge. As Swami Vivekananda points out, *Maya* is not a theory. 'It is simply a statement of facts about the universe as it exists.' Disharmony, contradictions, pain, misery and suffering,—these constantly hover around us and they are the results of our attachment to physical objects. One should deny the optimism of sense enjoyment, which is fleeting, and assert the real joy which is of the super-sensuous, for it is permanent.

A certain *Sanyasi* used to give talks to his circle of students on *Maya*. 'The world is a delusion. Nothing exists except God. All of a sudden a frantic elephant was seen coming furiously, trampling everything that came in its way. People fled here and there. The students ran away and the *Sanyasi* followed suit. The poor *Sanyasi* in his fright could not see the pit that was before him and he fell down. When the field was cleared of the danger, the students came and pulled out the *Sanyasi* from the pit. But he began to boast, 'Did I not say that the world is a delusion? That elephant was a delusion. That pit in which I fell was a delusion. Your taking me out from the pit was a delusion.' This was too much for the students. They pushed their *gurus* once again into the pit and told him, 'The pit is a delusion. It should matter little to you whether you remain there or outside. But the *Sanyasi* cried and retracted his words that the world was a delusion. It was only then that he was drawn out again from the pit. This story illustrates that merely to say that the world is unreal cannot enable one to reach the Reality. It is just like the man in the dark trying to reason about light by merely crying

"darkness" The Reality appears to him, who has renounced life in the truest sense of the word and is not frightened of consequences

Five learned men went to a village. They came across a villager who made no pretension to any learning. This simple man of God said, "One must truly die and the death of one's self is the real *mukti* (salvation)." The learned Vedantins could not understand the significance of the remark and laughed at his simplicity. It so happened that thieves broke into the house, where the five learned men were living with the villager who was their host. They made an uproar but the villager was silent. To him it mattered little what had happened in his house. What of it if his property was stolen and he was left penniless? Verily, his conduct was in conformity with what he said and believed. The death of the self is the real *mukti*."

When we try to understand God intellectually we cannot succeed. Intellect has its limitations. It can only give hints that there exists a God, the Creator and Regulator of the universe. 'It is beyond the power of intellect to give a correct knowledge of God.' God is a spiritual Truth which has to be felt. One has to yearn deeply and spiritually, pray and meditate sincerely and earnestly day and night. Then only will the great Truth filter through his mind and heart and soul.

Let us recall an episode in the life of Swami Vivekananda. After the death of his father he was left alone to maintain a starving family, consisting of himself, his mother, brothers and sisters. What hardships he had! What trials and tribulations he passed through! How his pride concealed the poverty that was gnawing away his heart! How he worked and drudged as a petty-

clerk in an attorney's office! How he ran away from the house at the time of meals on the pretence that he was dining out with a friend so that his frugal share of food be divided among his people at home! And yet this resolute man when he knelt at the image of Divine Mother never asked for any favour for personal comfort or satisfaction of the daily necessities of life. He only prayed for Light and Wisdom. "Mother, give me discrimination. Give me renunciation. Give unto me knowledge and devotion. Grant that I may have an uninterrupted vision of Thee."

This is the way to realize God

Sri Ramakrishna was the most perfect embodiment of God realization. His teaching on God realization can be summed up in the following sentences. Whatever be the avocation of a man let him understand and realize that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent. It is He who has become all diverse creatures objects of love, respect or compassion and yet He is beyond all these. Such realization of Divinity in Humanity leaves no room for arrogance. By realizing it a man cannot have any jealousy or pity for any other being. Service of man knowing him to be the manifestation of God purifies the heart and in no time such an aspirant realizes himself as part and parcel of God, Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.

The way in which Sri Ramakrishna died was unique. He was suffering from cancer of the throat. He had developed powers to such a great extent being a yogi of the very highest type that if he had wished he could have been easily cured of his ailment. His sore throat gave him intense pain and he found great diffi-

culty in eating even the smallest particle of food. Swami Vivekananda and about a dozen other disciples who were day and night in attendance upon their Master during his last illness, were so much touched and afflicted by the sight of the great suffering of their *guru* that they entreated him that he should invoke the Divine Mother to cure him. Sri Ramakrishna said, "It is easy for you to talk like that. But I can never say such things." Naren (Swami Vivekananda) said, "But that will not do. You must tell the Mother about it, (The Hindus invoke God, *Iswara*, as Mother and not Father) at least for our sake." Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Very well, let me see what can be done."

The Master went into meditation and this was the reply which he received, which he communicated to his disciples: "I said to Her, pointing to my throat, 'I cannot eat any thing on account of a sore here. Please see that I may eat a little.' The Mother replied, pointing to you all, 'Why, are you not eating through so many mouths?' I was so much ashamed that I could not utter another word." What a renunciation! What a sacrifice! What perfection! What a firm realization of the truth of *advaita*!

When the pain became unendurable this great man of God would smile lest his devotees should weep over his agony and would say, "The disease is naturally of the body. I see many forms of the Lord and this (his own form), too, is one of them."

Swami Vivekananda's dauntlessness, his terrible austerities, at times bordering on insanity, his extraordinary power of endurance were the result of the great spiritual wealth he had inherited from his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. It is said that he would walk miles

Christ, saying that he had vigilantly followed all the commandments of God, but he had not realized God

'The young man said unto him, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?'

'Jesus said unto him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come and follow Me.'" (St. Mathews, Ch 19, 20 & 21)

The young man had great possessions and we are told he went away sorrowful for he had not the heart to follow Christ's advice

Renunciation is the basic thing in God-realization
St Francis made poverty his bride He mixed with the poor and lepers. He ministered to their wants. He was a true child of God. The Franciscan Order, established by him has to-day many votaries. He started it with only seven disciples. The seed sown by him, watered by Time, has grown into a magnificent tree with a brilliant foliage. Each Franciscan is made to take the following vow, "To preach peace and patience to tend the wounded to relieve the distressed to reclaim the erring, to bless them who persecute you, to pray for them that despitefully use you"

St Francis died more than seven hundred years ago, but we still feel the fragrance of his life, for it was a life of dedication to God. How beautiful are these words of the saint which epitomize his teaching and which he actually practised

"Blessed is he that truly loves and seeketh not love
 in return

"Blessed is he that serves and desires not to be

"Blessed is he that doeth good unto others and seeketh not that others do good to him."

It is by the path of renunciation that God can be realized. In fact, it forms the bed-rock. We shall deal with this subject of renunciation in a separate chapter, later on. Suffice it to say, that the ancient conception which led men, chiefly in India, to adopt a life of penance and austerity without rendering any useful service to humanity is now fast giving way.

The Ramakrishna Mission is based on a very rational foundation. It preaches renunciation as well as human service. A man has to take the vow of asceticism and celibacy, but that does not mean that he should retire in the cell of a monastery and be absorbed only in meditation and prayers.

Swami Vivekananda often chided those who sought their own selfish salvation by leaving the world and shutting themselves up in a monastery. When he was reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's own life, which was spent in prayers and meditation, he would turn round to the misguided followers of the great *Rishi* and say, "You think you understand Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think that *Gnana* is dry knowledge, to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart! Your *Bhakti* is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him which is mighty little. Hands off!"

This reminds us of the story of a certain king who after his death was being taken by a Spirit to Heaven, which was his reward for his pious deeds on earth. He passed by the blazing furnace of Hell, where repentant souls were reaping a harvest of pain and suffering for



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at the Parliament of Religions, one can only think of him as one speaking with authority having realized the Divinity he preached His hands raised in continual benediction his voice murmuring or thundering as it might be the Gospel of the Highest Consciousness his face beaming with love and goodwill Swami Vivekananda lives in the memory of America as the Man with a Message for the West one who walked with God (*Life of Swami Vivekananda Vol II*)

What was the cause of Swami Vivekananda's phenomenal success in America? A monk not polished in western ways of living he held large audiences spell bound He made a huge circle of friends and admirers He himself had developed psychic and occult powers to a remarkable extent But he never used them In fact he believed that the development of these gifts was an impediment to man's spiritual growth on the right lines What was then the secret of his great success? Was it his intense sincerity his great ability his unwavering and unwearying perseverance? Yes but above all there was the Divine Power behind him He had realization He called himself the child of God and ever invoked Him to give fellow workers from the Earth's bravest and best to help him in spreading His Father's message to a benumbed dreary world steeped in *maya* and darkness

The urge for God comes when everything in the world loses its charm Such was the case in the life of St Francis of Assisi He fell seriously ill at the age of twenty five It was a turning point in his life He became a religious mendicant He joined a troop of beggars and gave away whatever he had This reminds us of the story in the *Bible* A certain rich man came to

their misdeeds on earth. "I shall not go to Heaven when so many souls are in such terrible pain and suffering. I must save them; I must comfort them. Their pain is too great. Let me stay with them." Hell, we are told, was soon transformed into Heaven by the radiant touch of this man's altruism and generosity to serve others, even at the cost of losing his own salvation.

Such also was the spirit shown by Father Damien. He was sent as a missionary to preach Christianity to the heathens in the far-off Hawaiian Isles. Did he stay in his job? No. When he saw lepers bundled off to the distant Molokai Island to die a lonely death in the wilderness, without human care and ministrations, he decided to go with them. He founded a colony. He built houses for them. He nursed them, he clothed them, he ate with them, he sang to them. His life was immersed in their lives. Living with them and working with them for sixteen long years, his mind and heart devoted to them, he at last fell a victim to their vile disease. He died a leper.

Damien's sacrifice is an example of the most transcendental value. His realization of God was the result of his passionate love and sympathy for humanity, stricken with a misfortune of the direst nature. There are very few instances of such great and heroic sacrifices made at the altar of suffering humanity. The name of Damien shall remain immortal in the pages of human history.

God-realization is not a possession, an article that can be purchased at a shop. It is not a possession like a motor-car or a house. It is only by giving up ourselves that God is realized. Just as a man cannot purchase sunshine at a grocer's shop, but it peeps through his window when he rises from his bed in the morning, in

God is a living reality. It is only by surrendering ourselves to the will of God and not by trying to solve the problems of life by an intellectual process that God-realization can ever be attained. God is Spirit. God is Love. He wants us to become like a Spirit, to love all, to surrender ourselves to His will. Then only could life be sweetened and the vision of God slowly enter into the arena of our life. Faith in God dispels fear. Faith in God gives courage and heroism. Faith triumphs where intellect fails.

We hope we have now made it sufficiently clear that God can be realized not by man's intellect or reason but by his spirituality. An intellectual giant may be a spiritual babe. A man may be honest, truthful, hard-working, dutiful, loyal, forgiving, a grateful son, a loving father, a kind husband, a generous foe, a staunch friend, a good citizen. But so long as his mind is engrossed in worldly affairs he is still stumbling in the outer court. He cannot enter the inner sanctuary unless he develops a finer perception of life. Good thoughts, fine emotions, beautiful impulses and high motives are the spiritual eye, the spiritual ear and spiritual understanding.

It is a common notion among western thinkers that a complete and harmonious development of the head, heart and hand constitutes spirituality. This is erroneous. Spirituality is far more than this harmonious development. As we have shown in the foregoing pages, we have to transcend the limitations of the senses, to get an insight of the Truth, the Reality, that pervades the universe. We shall speak of this at greater length when we deal with the subject in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS RELIGION?

The Prophets and Their Teachings

What is religion? The natural instinct in man from the remotest past has been to probe into the mysteries of God. He wants to know his relationship with the Infinite. He wants to know all about the universe. There is a secret longing to know what things happen after death. What are the laws of nature? Man longs to comprehend things which are beyond physical vision and understanding. Religion satisfies this inner urge. It is a live force. It is a dynamic energy which transforms the dull waters of life into the richness of joyous vigour.

Religion should not be confounded with Theology. Theology is science. Religion is life. It is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, spirit of our spirit. It is our spiritual bread. It is a personal tie between man and God.

Religion is *Darshan* vision of *Dharma*, the Laws of Life. It is revelation. The prophets and the seers got this revelation and the *Bible* and the *Koran*, the *Avesta* and the *Vedas* are books of God's revelation no doubt. This is however revelation at second hand. But when God unveils Himself and opens His secrets to the heart of the devotee direct there is true revelation. It should be a direct communion with God a personal experience. It is only then that the power of religion upon the action of the individual soul might be said to have been felt. Religion opens the door of our spirit. It is by the eye of the spirit, that the Great Spirit which is God, can be seen.

and felt and understood, not by the senses which can observe and test the natural phenomena but can never understand what causes them,—the Intelligence behind them which is God

We reiterate, religion teaches us our relationship with God. In fact, this relationship is very close and distinct. The *Upanishad* says, 'The Supreme Soul and the human soul are two birds the friends and companions of each other, living on the same *pipal* tree of the universe. One of them eats the sweet fruit of the tree the other looks on.' 'On that same tree,' continues the *Upanishad*, 'the human soul, ignorant of the truth and being overwhelmed, mourns on account of its weakness but when it sees it is in the company of the other, who is powerful and comprehends the greatness of that other it is free from sorrow.' Religion is a great solace in life. The true purpose of religion is to give man a vision of the Laws of Life and the knowledge of the Creator. It is *Shakti*, energy. It is *Sadhana*. It is the highest bliss.

Ordinarily we have a crude idea of religion when we associate it with scriptures and churches. But truly speaking as we have said religion is a matter of personal experience. It is a process of the transformation of the soul. It is *Brahmadarsana*, i.e., insight into the Reality. Religion is not a mere pursuit of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. It is the exaltation of the soul, it is 'transformation "into the plane of the Universal Spirit."

No man can live without religion. We all hunger for the secret of life and in the midst of life's struggle religion is the only thing that keeps the mind content and cheerful. Religion is absolutely necessary for all except perhaps those who have already realized God and do not need any further incentive. By religion we mean what is

ordinarily understood by the word. It must not be thought that the true Bhaktas and Seers, who have realized God, do not need the incentive of active communion with God. The attachment to God can never be dispensed with so long as the human soul continues its separate existence. It is only when it is immersed in the vast Sea of Eternity, that is God, can the longing cease. But the end of religion is to transcend religion. When God is realized, everything is realized." The end of religion is to transcend religion. When God is realized religion becomes superfluous.

"Who findeth God becometh wholly God:
And unto God there is no other God."

Religion is the command or revelation of God. We have to understand the laws of God and nature, discovered by the intellectual and spiritual labour of scientists and saints.

In the olden times when people roamed in deserts and forests as nomads and had no conception of any kind of civilization, they worshipped nature. They also worshipped their ancestors. When a man died they would place food before the dead body.

The ancient Egyptians had a conception that man had two bodies and that when he died his physical body should be kept intact, lest his other body should perish. We can then understand the secret of the mummies buried in the pyramids of Egypt, which have outlived the blast of time.

Religion had its origin in fear. But when prophets came they gave to the world their revelations and thus religious systems were founded by them at different places. How did the prophets get the revelation? It was by transcending the limitations of the senses. Man is not

governed by mere senses. There are higher faculties and powers within him. Seers and saints can see much more than others. The vaults of heaven open their secrets to the seekers of knowledge. All the prophets Zoroaster, Sri Krishna, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, even Buddha, discovered the eternal law in a supersensuous state of existence. Buddha's enlightenment was not the result of mere reasoning or intellectual pursuits. He used to sit under the *Bodhi* tree, wrapped up in deep meditation and it was only in the supersensuous state of mind that he got the true revelation.

Just as the rays of the sun penetrate every fibre and root of the tree, transforming it into a abundance of rich foliage and ripening fruit, in the same way the object of religion is to vitalise every fibre of the human soul for God-consciousness.

Religion is a science of life. It is a science of the Spirit. It is the highest science. It is *Atma Vidya*. It takes us to the Infinite. Rituals and dogmas, creeds and mythology, do not alone constitute religion. They are good as a means to achieve the end. In essence every religion is the same. The fundamental teachings of all religions are identical. But for the barriers of rituals and dogmas there would be a proper harmony of all religions. The essential teaching in every religion is the union of man's soul with God.

Religion is not the question of a mere doctrine. It is not the matter of a mere tradition. It is an evolving experience, a growing realization, a process of perpetual renewal of life for the ultimate realization of God.

Truly speaking, religion consists of three parts (a) Philosophy or the laws of life, (b) Mythology,

(c) **Rituals and Dogmas** Of these three the most important is the teaching of the Divine Law. Rituals, dogmas, forms and ceremonies appeal to the masses. They strike their imagination and as we have said they are useful only as a means to an end. They have a place and they play an important role in the framework of religion. But true religion is not in the temple. It is neither in the books, rituals, rites, ceremonies or dogmas. It is not the church creed which a man professes that is his religion. What he practically believes and lays to his heart concerning his relation to God, the universe, his duties and destiny, that is his religion.

We shall attempt in this chapter to give a bird's eye view of the essential teachings of the various important religions of the world,—Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam.

There is in man an innate longing to commune with some spirit, some god, some exterior invisible being, for some supernormal knowledge and power to help him in his mundane affairs. Even among the half-civilised tribesmen in the primitive times this invoking of god or gods to help man in worldly affairs was a common feature of life. The primitive man prayed to his Gods for an abundant harvest and victory in war. He sought the aid and assistance of his God merely to satisfy his own practical needs. He never sought truth for the sake of truth or righteousness. Even to day there lurks in us the desire to ever commune with some divine agency for supernormal powers to gain our ends in life. But there are some earnest souls, the scholar, the philosopher, the altruist, who want to know truth for the sake of truth and God has revealed Himself through the mouths of such selfless people. God's revelation comes to him,

who intrinsically yearns for God and His Truth and though God is unfathomable, "unknowable", so infinitely vast that no finite body can pierce through the mystery of His transcendent nature, still he is all love and He responds to love. He creates "love to reward love." It is thus that God's truth has been revealed to man. God is a riddle but it is a riddle which His Spirit enables us to understand and interpret. We are grateful therefore a million times to those founders of religion who, having had a vision of God and known the Truth, have communicated it to us in different ways and in different manners.

Truth is many-sided. Whether it is Divine Justice, Divine Love or Righteousness, each prophet shows a path to God. Let us then try to understand the teachings of these great founders of religion.

Buddhism

Buddhism recognises no Eternal Being but an Eternal Becoming. Buddha's own life was one of singular beauty and attraction. He was the noblest and greatest of men. He proved by his great suffering, sacrifices and sincerity, that even without any faith in an Eternal Being, it is possible to rise to the highest level of perfection and obtain complete salvation. The four-fold teaching of Buddha is:

1. Sorrow is inseparable from existence;
2. The cause of sorrow is thirst or desire;
3. Sorrow can be destroyed only by the destruction of this thirst or desire; and
4. The door to *Nirvana*, the quieting of pain, —salvation, whatever you may call it,—is through the Eight-fold Holy Path.

Christ preached his religion as Son of God. His was a revealed religion. His birth was supernatural. He was born of the virgin Mary. He was born in poverty. Forsaken by friends he died violently on the Cross.

Buddha's life offers a strange contrast. He was born in a palace. He was married and had a son. He left the palace and took to austerities to find out a solution for human suffering. He achieved it by a singular life of renunciation and hard labour. He achieved all the supernatural powers of a Christ or a Zoroaster, but so great was he that even after becoming omniscient, a *yogi* of *yogis*, he resolved to serve men for their salvation.

"I wish I might this day destroy within me all human passions.

"But why should I in disguise arrive at the knowledge of the Truth? I will attain omniscience and become a Buddha and save men and angels.

"Why should I cross the ocean, resolute but alone? I will attain omniscience and enable men and angels to cross.

"By this resolution of mine, I, a man of resolution,...

"Embarking in the ship of Truth, I will carry across with me men and angels."

It is this resolution and firm attitude of Buddha not to enjoy the *Nirvana*, which he had attained for himself, but to carry with him "men and angels," that is the most enthralling feature of his life. Christ suffered for men, but he came with a mission from his Divine Father. Buddha solved the problem of life, himself working it out in his own life and daily struggles, and died at a mature age in peace and perfect quietude, leaving behind a rich legacy of Truth and Beauty.

It is wrong to say that Buddha's doctrine teaches self exaltation and self deification and that he gave himself to thoughts of self glorification. On the contrary, if it be recognised that man's soul is an immortal spark of God, Buddha's teaching of entire renunciation of the life of senses proves that it is possible to realize God or the Highest Law, even in this life, by the development of the hidden faculties in man.

Not only that Buddhism has spread widely in the world,—every third man in the world is a Buddhist,—but its teachings have fascinated some of the best western minds. Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, was an ardent admirer of the philosophy of Buddha. His love for Buddha was so great that Buddha's statuette always adorned his writing table. He took it with him wherever he went.

More than anything else, *The Light Of Asia*, composed by Sir Edwin Arnold, has popularised Buddhism in the West. This poem speaks of the Great Renunciation. In a very exquisite passage Arnold shows how the *Devas* sang at Buddha's birth. His birth in a royal palace had been predicted and it was also foretold that he would preach the Law and save all flesh. Every one knows the story of Buddha's life. He left at the early age of twenty-nine the glittering bars of his royal home, his young wife and child and aged father, in the quest of Truth to find a solution for human suffering and misery. He practised asceticism for six long years. He was reduced to skin and bone. At one time it appeared he had been so reduced by fasting and other austerities that there was hardly any strength left in him to drag himself. The bones jutted out from his skeleton body. But the penances and austerities did not give him any vision of the

Truth It was a fruitless search It was like time wasted "in tying the air into knots" He discontinued his fast The five Brahman ascetics, who had followed Buddha and had been his chief disciples, forsook him when Buddha gave up asceticism

Buddhā then took to meditation. He sat under the *Boa* tree and said, 'Never from this seat will I stir until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom' And he was rewarded It is said that he got a knowledge of all his previous existences and a knowledge of the chain of causes and effects He became omniscient

During his meditation under the *Boa* tree Mara the evil temptress, did her best to wean him from the straight path But Buddha refused to listen to the siren voice of the temptress A legendary story says that he was sustained during the seven weeks spent under the *Boa* tree, when he was in meditation by some milk rice brought to him miraculously

When Buddha got *Nirvana* for which he struggled so hard he was not content with it He refused to be selfish He made it a mission of his life to spread the knowledge which he had gained and the remaining portion of his life full forty years and odd was spent in preaching the great Truth What are the cardinal teachings of Buddha? Buddha was not a metaphysician The subtle points of metaphysics did not appeal to him He was neither a ritualist nor a doctrinaire He was convinced that man was the cause of his own suffering And to bring an end to that suffering the only remedy lay in practising renunciation in leading a life of desirelessness Nowhere do we find a higher ethical concept of life as in Buddhism Buddha argued that by leading a good and virtuous life it is possible to break the chain of cause and

effect The soul can attain *Nirvana* only when its old accounts are squared up when there are no more misdeeds to be accounted for in the next life *Karma* and Re incarnation form the basic teachings of Buddha He taught men

" Within yourselves deliverance must be sought
Each man his prison makes "

The Noble Eight-fold Path, which Buddha preached for attainment of spiritual health and harmony, is as under

1. Right understanding (*samma ditthi*)

This has reference to the Four Noble Truths in regard to suffering, its origin, how it can be annihilated and how liberation can be attained.

2 Right aspiration (*samma samkappa*)

Right mental attitude of sympathy and selflessness

3 Right speech (*samma vaccha*)

4 Right action (*samma kammanta*) in harmony with mental attitude

5 Right livelihood (*samma ajjya*)

Such occupation as does not harm any one and is conducive to spiritual progress

6 Right effort (*samma vayama*) to produce the best in us

7 Right attentiveness (*samma sati*).

8 Right concentration (*samma samadhi*)

As we have said, there is no dogma in Buddhism There is no authority to follow Buddha simply gives a code of ethics to eschew evil and follow good Every body is his own teacher and every one has to acquire knowledge by dint of his own effort Not blind faith but



LORD BUDDHA

self exertion to gain knowledge is Buddha's teaching. He wants every one to investigate for himself and realize truth by his own efforts. Buddha's duty was only to show the light. This light is universal. But it is for every one to see the light with his own individual eyes. Buddhism is a way to enlightenment. It is a religion both universal and individual, a religion which no man can ever take any exception to as it is in consonance with the teachings of modern thought and science and satisfies the needs of the modern man. Buddha established the Order of the yellow robe, what is called the *Sangha*, the monastic system. The first to follow the *Sangha* were his own son and wife.

In every religion there are two classes of teachings—the exoteric and esoteric. The former are meant for the masses, the latter for those who thirst for spiritual development and are eager to renounce the world to realize God. They form the mystical teachings suitable for those who are already advanced in spiritual knowledge and experience.

So far as the exoteric teachings are concerned, the Buddhistic teachings are not such as cannot be comprehended and practised by every individual. He teaches how by eschewing evil—removing evil thoughts, not speaking a lie, not getting into passion or anger, not delighting in sensuous pleasures, not depending upon external rites, not injuring or rebuking any one—an individual can prepare himself for a higher state of *Bodhi sattva*. His is really a negative philosophy. But through negation we come to affirmation and it should not be considered that Buddha relied only upon the negative part. His chief concern was to teach man that the cause of his suffering lay in his thirst for desires. And

the subjugation of the desires forms the chief aim and ideal of Buddhistic thought.

It is natural that a few only can subjugate the mind and the senses in the eagerness to follow the path of Truth, to attain liberation. Buddha's teachings to such as reach the inner temple are of a higher order. It is esoteric or the occult that is the most fascinating part in every religion and it must be said that, like Zoroastrianism and Hinduism, there is the occult side in Buddhism also. When the initiate becomes an *Arhat* he gets supernormal powers. The invisible becomes visible. The man becomes a *gnani*, but if he seeks powers rather than wisdom, he becomes bound to the wheel of transmigration. The goal of a true *Arhat* is liberation *Nirvana*, not *siddhis* or supernormal powers.

The following passage sums up very beautifully the essence of Buddhistic teaching

"For my cultivation, faith is the seed self-combat is the fertilizing rain, the weeds I destroy are the cleaving to existence, wisdom is my plough and its guiding shaft is modesty, perseverance draws my plough and I guide it with the rein of my mind, the field I work in is the Law and the harvest that I reap is the never dying nectar of *Nirvana*. Those who reap this harvest destroy all the weeds of sorrow."

The great Buddha destroyed the caste system. He was not enamoured of rituals and creeds. He shattered the senseless custom of offering sacrifices to the Gods. But he emphasised all the true teachings of the old *Rishis* of India. The ethical aspects of the *Upanishads* were upheld.

He was not in favour of the extreme type of asceticism as practised by Hindu *Jogis* . He offered the Middle Path. His renunciation is of the better type—viz., a state of complete desirousness, to be achieved not by fasting and emasculation but by vigorous control of the mind, the most restless thing in man's nature. Though it might be said that Buddhism is not a rebellion against the spirit of the Vedantic philosophy of the old *Rishis* of India, it must be confessed that the God-element being absent in his teachings, there is no room for the man in the street to offer his *Bhakti* . There is no clear conception, no ideal offered, which could stir him to reach the end. *Nirvana* is the goal, but without worship of the Eternal, the Buddhist doctrine appears to fall short of its mark. It cannot be denied that there is some truth in the comment that "a religion without God is an impossibility." And still it may be contended that Buddhism is not atheism. It is certain that Buddha sensed God. If not, how could he have described the various changes in the universe without the knowledge of the cause and effect of creation? Or how could he be called 'Enlightened?' Was he not a *gnanis* ? He knew the infinitude of God and understood the difficulty of expressing in full His Divinity.

'Oh Amitara measure not with words
The immeasurable nor sink the string of thought
Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,
Who answers errs. Say Nought

The Light of Asia.

Even if Buddhism does not speak of a personal creator or ruler, it must not be thought that there is no room for prayer in the framework of this religion. The Buddhist does offer his prayer, but that prayer is not

addressed to a personal God for the purpose of some favour or reward. It is an expression of a faith, determined intention to become perfect in life. Self-perfection is the ideal set forth before every follower of Buddha and the *Bodhisattva* meditates upon this ideal of perfection. He concentrates the mind upon all the high moral ideals set forth by Buddha in his teachings.

The *Bodhisattva* has an eager longing nay he is resolute and determined to emulate Buddha's perfection and to rise to his high level. The image of Buddha as an embodiment of universal truth is constantly kept by the initiate before his mind's eye. He ponders on it he meditates on it he centres all his thought forces on this ideal of human perfection to attain *Bodhi* enlightenment. Our prayers to God are generally petitions for the satisfaction of our earthly needs or wants. The *Bodhisattva's* prayer is a vow taken with determination to do good to the world and to reach the highest stage of perfection.

The *Bodhisattva's* vows are called *Pranidhana*. It means concentration upon a certain moral ideal for tranquillising the mind. What are the effects of such mental concentration such spiritual exercises? The *Bodhisattva* gets a direct or personal experience of the unity of existence absorption of the Cosmos into Self. The Buddhist's prayer is not an appeal for selfish gain. It is an utterance of devotion to the Buddhist's cause. It is an expression of the faith the iron will that determination and the zeal to attain to the state of *Tathagata* that moral perfection of Buddha. His prayer is full of adoration and exaltation of feeling for he concentrates on the attainment of the highest knowledge and the highest virtues. The greatest importance that is laid in the *Bodhisattva's* training in morality is the

ONENESS OF EXISTENCE This is the primal and most important thought in Buddhistic philosophy. This feeling of oneness with all is productive of the highest excellences in man. Buddha's vow was, 'Indeed let it be so that I be born as one, who having overcome the world, would work in the world for the benefit of the world and should live for the weal of this world' The world is conceived of as "a stage of spiritual development, in which all beings participate in, and contribute to, the realization of the truth of oneness (*eka-jana*) or the cosmic enlightenment (*bodhi-chitta*)" This Oneness of Life is the highest truth preached by Buddha

The true Buddhist is cognizant of this Oneness in the universe and it is therefore, that when he takes the various vows the first vow is to serve others

'There are beings without limit

Let us take the vow to convey them all across "

The other vows are

"There are depravities in us without number,

Let us take the vow to extinguish them all.

There are truths without end,

Let us take the vow to comprehend them all "

Buddhism after the death of Buddha, not only took a firm hold in India, but it spread even beyond its confines India became a greater India Asoka, India's greatest sovereign was a great admirer of Buddha and he popularised Buddhism throughout the length and breadth of the country At Buddha Gaya, the spot where Buddha is supposed to have got enlightenment, Asoka had a temple built of 11 storeys in height, with golden statues of Buddha, all over the place, surrounded by *Pipal* trees and not improbably the original *Boa* tree also where Buddha used to sit for meditation

Buddha's *stupas* are found all over the country and Asoka's edicts, engraved on pillars and mountain sides, still bear witness to the great influence, which Buddhism in its time wielded upon the people of India. For full ten centuries it grew. It unified and stabilised India. India's art and literature, which flourished for a thousand years after Buddha's death, found their main source of inspiration in Buddhism. To-day, Buddhism is more in vogue in countries outside India than in India, which gave birth to Buddha. Buddha and Sri Shankaracharya may be considered as India's greatest sons, who have made the greatest contribution to human thought and spiritual development.

Hinduism or Vedic Religion

When we come to the subject of Hindu religion we shall not consider it in terms of Gods, creeds, rituals and dogmas. Most of the Westerners, in their crude ignorance of the philosophy and religion contained in the Vedic literature of about 5,000 years ago, dismiss Hinduism as a senseless Pantheism, a crude understandable jumble of *maja* (delusion), *karma* (belief in fate) and *tyaga* (renunciation).

Radhakrishnan, in his two most scholarly volumes of *Indian Philosophy*, has in a very lucid style exposed the hollowness of the Western claim to intellectual domination. He shows that the highest truths of the spirit are expressed in the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the *Puranas* of ancient India. Indian philosophy—and by philosophy, we mean man's effort to understand and comprehend the universe—is at bottom spiritual. It is the spiritual side of India's thought and action that has an unceasing appeal to the human mind and, as such,

the *Vedas* stand supreme in the domain of Indian philosophical thought

The *yoga* system which we shall discuss separately in another chapter, is the finest inheritance of India from the *Rishis* of old. It is a priceless treasure.

According to Aurobindo Ghosh, the *Vedas* contain "secret doctrines and mystic philosophies," which are revealed only to the initiated.

There can be no true religion without a belief in the Absolute. And the *Vedas* speak of the Absolute Spirit, that is Immanent in nature. We shall not discuss the various deities or Gods (whether they are or not the embodiments or attributes of the Highest Spirit) that the Hindus believe in. God is 'a transcending consciousness' and this world is not a purposeless phantasm but the evolution of God.

The Law of Karma is the central teaching of the *Vedas*. The ethics of the *Vedas* enjoin upon man to lead a life of virtue, kindness and hospitality and do his *dharma* i.e. duty to men and animals and Gods. He is asked to lead his life as if he were in the very presence of God.

Whether asceticism plays a dominant role in the Vedic teaching, is a matter of controversy. To consider the Vedic religion as pessimistic is not correct. Ascetic practices were observed with a view to obtain supernatural powers. The hymns speak of the joy in nature. It is reasonable to think that the ancients took real delight in nature's beauty and grandeur which filled their souls with light. They avoided sensuous pleasures, —the mere materialistic fodder —which we to day so foolishly clamour for. They sought substance. We run after shadow. It is therefore fair to say that the Vedic teaching far from being pessimistic in its outlook, is,

really speaking, optimistic—for it shows the way of the spirit and not the body which withers and decays

The message of the *Upanishads* is one of hope and perfection which can only come by self-conquest through a series of births and deaths. 'The formulation of the theory of *samsara* or re-birth is no proof that the *Upanishads* are pessimistic. Life on earth is the means of self-perfection. We have to undergo the discipline of *samsara* in our efforts towards the higher joy and complete possession of spiritual truth. That which gives zest to life is the supreme motive of the joy of self-conquest. *Samsara* is only a succession of spiritual opportunities. Life is a stage in spiritual perfection, a step in the passage to the infinite. It is the time for preparing the soul for eternity" (*Indian Philosophy* by S Radhakrishnan Vol I page 147)

The *Upanishads* reveal that there is no religion in mere sacrifices. There is no religion in mere nature-worship and making offerings to the Gods. Not formalism but an inward resurgence of the soul with a view to identify itself with the great All Soul is the essence of true religion. A true spiritual life dedicated to God, is the teaching of the *Upanishads*. 'Make every action, every feeling, every thought an offering to God' Such is the earnest appeal of the *Upanishads*.

We need not enter into the metaphysical teachings of the *Upanishads*. This is beyond the competence of the author and the scope of this work. The Eternal Spirit, *Brahman* is described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* says the author of *Indian Philosophy*, as follows. That from which these beings are born that in which when born they live and that into which they enter at their death, that is *Brahman*. "God cannot be measured or understood by man's finite intelligence. It is by transcending

intellect that we can realize Him. The highest stage of realization is called *Ananda*, bliss, when the knower, the known and the knowledge become one. This realization is attained by knowledge. In fact, we have to become like a child to understand the Infinite. It is the naturalness and freshness of the child that is required to climb the steps that lead to God realization and not proud learning. 'In the vision of God, that which sees is not Reason, but a something greater than and prior to Reason, something presupposed by Reason as is the object of vision.' God is 'unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know.' We can feel God only in our humility and childlike simplicity.

The subject of *maya* occupies an important part in the teaching of the *Upanishads*. There are various theories regarding creation, but the one that has gained ground is that God only is Real and the Creation is unreal or that it has no real existence. This world is only a shadow of the Real, that it is an illusion, a mere appearance. The only thing that matters is God.

The theory of *maya* is the pillar of the Vedantic philosophy. The world is a delusion. We talk in vain and are so carried away by the senses and are so absorbed by our desires, that we miss the Reality. We forget the true purpose of life. We forget that God is the only Reality in the universe. We are engrossed in things that surround us. We are carried away by petty satisfactions. But what we see around us is not Reality. This world has no absolute existence. It exists because we see it with our senses. But mystics tell us that the world changes its appearance with the growth in us of higher powers of perception. It becomes different from what it is. It means the world has no real existence. To speak

in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "It has no unchangeable, immoveable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence, seeing that it exists and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence." From our earthly point of view it exists, but from the supramundane point of view it has no existence.

The essential teaching of the *Vedas* is that everything is immersed in *Brahman*, who is the pervading essence throughout the universe and who is the only Reality. The following story is an illustration of this truth:

"Fetch me from thence a fruit of the *Nyagrodha* tree." "Here is one, sir." "Break it." "It is broken, sir." "What do you see there?" "These seeds, almost infinitesimal." "Break one of them." "It is broken, sir." "What do you see there?" "Nothing, sir."

The father said, "My son, the subtle essence which you do not perceive there, of that very essence this great *Nyagrodha* tree exists. Believe it, my son, that which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it."

The simple theory of the evolution of creation in the *Upanishads* is that *Brahman* first created ether, and from ether was generated air and from air was produced fire which, in turn, gave birth to water and from water, earth came into existence. With the manifestation of earth there came into life the plants and the herbs, which gave food and from food, came the seed and from the seed, man. Man is the crown of God's creation. *Brahman* is Absolute, because He is not exhausted by His manifestation through creations. He is immanent in nature and transcends nature. This is the central thought in the

Upanishads The Infinite is working in the finite And the object of life is to rise to the highest state of blessedness of the Infinite

Life is a struggle It is a battlefield There is not only struggle in the external world Much of the storm and chaos is felt by the individual in his own heart The reason why the *Vedas* call this world as *maya* is that we are so much sense dominated that we forget the Reality. It is the satisfaction of the senses that creates unreality. Love of wealth, name and fame, husband wife and children, mother and father, are *maya* in this respect that if we are possessed by them, we do not realize God Possession of wealth is not a sin. But to be possessed by wealth is a sin The moment we make Mammon our God the real God is forgotten It unleashes the demon of pride and lust, avarice and greed What is wanted is detachment from selfish desires and attachment to God We must root out not the tender feelings of love sympathy, compassion and charity, but pride and lust covetousness and arrogance which possession of wealth invariably creates and encourages It is only the love of the Eternal that should be the guiding principle of life It is only then that we can achieve permanent bliss To be separated from God is the highest anguish To be united with God is the highest bliss.

The gratification of the senses leads only to vain hopes and fears It is unhappiness Desirelessness and self conquest alone can bring inward purification It is identifying self with the Pure Self which is the highest bliss The sense enjoyment is fleeting It ends in pain and unhappiness It is only the apiritual joy that is lasting

Know the Self or *Atman* as the Lord who sits in the chariot called the body *Buddhi* or intelligence is the

charioteer, mind is the reins, the senses are the horses and the objects are the roads. The self, the senses and the mind combined, the intelligent call the enjoyer. But he who has no understanding but is weak in mind his senses run riot like the vicious horses of charioteer. He who has understanding and is strong-minded, his senses are well controlled, like the good horses of charioteer. He who is without understanding, who is thoughtless and impure, never reaches the immortal, immaterial state, but enters into the round of births. But he who has understanding and he who is thoughtful and pure reaches the state from which there is no return" (*Katha Upanishad*.)

The Spirit craves for eternal bliss. We miss the goal of life when we allow desires to overcome the inner urge for freedom. True renunciation does not lie necessarily in running to the forest and leading a solitary, ascetic life, in a cave or monastery. But to kill the senses and become completely detached are the essence of renunciation. If we can go about our work like soldiers, our mind and heart attached to God, with no thought of worldly gain, no care for the consequences, we are on the right path. To sacrifice honour, fame, name, wealth, human affection for the sake of God, Truth and Righteousness, that is true renunciation. Complete detachment is the keystone of a life of renunciation. It is only then that the ascetic or the house holder sees God.

It is said about Sri Ramakrishna that even though he was married, he treated his young wife as his mother. Not a single impure thought ever crossed the mind of this man of resolute will.

There is nothing so unique and picturesque in India as the system of religious asceticism, if those who follow it are actuated by a desire of renunciation in the truest

sense of the word. There are various religious orders both in Buddhism and Hinduism, the members of which take the vows of celibacy, poverty, obedience, prayers, meditation and silence. The ascetic who religiously carries out his vows is an asset, not a drain, as is erroneously made out by those who cannot understand the ideals of Indian asceticism. But unfortunately those who flock and don the saffron robe do so out of motives of no real renunciation. A majority is composed of illiterate pretenders and idlers, who have no purpose in life and wish to eke out an existence without shouldering any responsibility. Furthermore, the contact of the West with the East has greatly influenced Eastern thought and a life of service without any attachment is considered as the *summum bonum* of life. It is no wonder that the author of *Indian Philosophy* interprets the teachings of the *Upanishads* in the following manner:

"There is no call to forsake the world, but only to give up the dream of its separate reality. We are asked to pierce behind the veil, realize the presence of God in the world of nature and society. We are to renounce the world in its immediacy, break with its outward appearance but redeem it for God and make it express the divinity within us and within it. The *Upanishadic* conception of the world is a direct challenge to the spiritual inactivity of man. A philosophy of resignation, an ascetic code of ethics and a temper of languid world weariness are an insult to the Creator of the universe a sin against ourselves and the world which has a claim on us. The *Upanishads* believe in God and so believe in the world as well."

To sum up, the true *Sanyasin* is one, who does his round of duties, who has purified himself of all thoughts.

of self and egotism, who works for others, who thinks of others, who suffers for others, who has no desire for posterity and possession, who leads life in complete detachment and is truly intoxicated in God-love.

The soul is rooted in God and the aim and end of life is to liberate it from the drossness of nature surrounding it. As rivers that rise from mountain sources ultimately disappear in the waters of the ocean the soul must slip into the ocean of Divine Consciousness. It is of the essence of God. It is the infinite in the finite. The Law of *Karma* works in nature. We must reap as we sow. In the infinite cycles of birth and death we are chained to the effects of good and bad deeds. This enchainment is not only for this life. It is a preparation for the life to come. The Law of *Karma* is inexorable. Suffering is inevitable. There can be no spiritual progress without pain and suffering. It is a price which we have to pay for our freedom. Fate and Free will are like the two blades of a scissors. The goal of life is to reach 'the joyous expansion of the soul'. The path chalked out by Fate is a dreary one. But by strenuous exertion and exercise of Free will we can remove the obstacles and overcome the pitfalls and pave the way for ultimate liberation. The voice of conscience, the inner urge, the intuition in us,—to strengthen them with each iron resolve and master the difficulties that face us,—is the only way to successfully captain the ship of life, even if it be tossed in the whirlpool and eddies of misfortune.

Music, art and nature's gorgeous beauty give us moments of rapturous joy. They are symbolic of that eternal ecstatic bliss which is destined for every one, when with evil transformed into perennial good, the chain of birth and death comes to an end and the soul is

finally liberated The Buddhist calls it escape from the world of sorrow The *Vedantist* considers it as the sinking of the soul into the Ever lasting Ocean of the Infinite Spirit

The doctrine of rewards and punishments is as old as the hills It is the common acknowledgment in all faiths in all religions in all philosophies ancient and modern According to the *Upanishads* there are chiefly two paths which the soul has to traverse after it has finished its *karma* on this earth i.e. after physical death The *devayana* or the *arctimarga* is the path of light It is for the perfected soul who is journeying to the high seat of *Brahman* whence there is no return The other path is that of darkness *pitryana* or *dhuma marga* The soul travels to *chandraloka* or the region of the moon through the mist of smoke and night The soul on this path after enjoying the fruits of its good actions returns back to physical life

This theory of re birth appears more logical than the materialistic theory of annihilation of the soul with disruption of the human body and the theory of eternal retribution as preached in various religions Regarding the materialistic theory of the soul's destruction we know from the truth of Spiritualism that it is not tenable as we can communicate with the so called dead Spiritualism has established the fact of the survival of the human personality after death in more ways than one

The theory of re birth is a great consolation to those who suffer They know that punishment is only a remedial measure for the sins of the past life and ultimately it must take them to Eternity which is the final aim and end of all existence **ONENESS WITH GOD**

How well has the poet sung :

" I know that each sinful action,
As sure as the night brings shade,
Is somewhere sometime punished,
Though the hour be long delayed.

.....
I know there are no errors
In the great eternal plan,
And that all things work together,
For the final good of man."

Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism is considered to be the oldest monotheistic religion of the world. It is the first religion which gives the Revelation of God to man. It is the first religion which gives the great universal teaching of man's salvation and redemption.

The ancestors of the Iranians belonged to the original stock of Indo-Germanic people, or the Aryans, to which belonged also the Hindus of India and they lived together either in the area, which is now known as the Caucasus or in India, in the Punjab. It is more plausible that they lived in the Caucasus originally and, later on, when they migrated, one branch went to Iran and settled there and the other came down to India and made it its home.

Scholars inform us that there is a great deal of agreement in the terms used in the Iranian and Indian dialects and there is a great deal of agreement in religion. Bhai Manilal C. Parekh, the talented author of *The Gospel of Zoroaster*, which he describes as the Iranian *Veda*,—so very enthusiastic is he in seeing similarity



ZOROASTER

between Zoroastrianism and the teachings of ancient Indian *Vedas*,—commenting upon the points of agreement between Iranian and Ancient Vedic religion writes as under :

"Both the Persians and the Hindus agree in their terms for priest, sacrifice, song of praise, God and Lord, the sacred plant *Homa*, and a large number of gods and divine beings. In fact a whole vocabulary of religion has sprung up, and we can confidently say that the Indo-Persians have, during their stay together in a country which may very well be identified with Persia and its neighbourhood, succeeded in creating a new movement of religious life. Not only are the names of many of the gods, which both the Hindus and the Iranians know at this stage of their life, common to them, but such terms as express the various religious acts of a developed system of religion are found here practically the same in both the Hindus and the Iranian religions. A few of these equations may be given here to make this clear. They are these

SANSKRIT	MEANING	ZEND
<i>Namas</i>	Worshipping	<i>Nemank</i>
<i>Pra-vaç</i>	Publish (the sacred Doctrine)	<i>Fravac</i>
<i>Sam kar</i>	Prepare the offering	<i>Hankar</i>
<i>Hotra</i>	Priest	<i>Zaotra</i>
<i>Havana</i>	Sacrifice	<i>Zavana</i>
<i>Prabhrtis</i>		<i>Fraberts</i>
<i>Stu, Stuts,</i>		<i>Stu, Stuts,</i>
<i>Stotar, Stoma</i>		<i>Stotar, Stoma</i>

SANSKRIT	MEANING	ZEND
<i>Prasasti</i>	Warship of God	<i>Frasasti</i>
<i>Ga, Gatha</i>		<i>Ga, Gatha</i>
<i>Mantra</i>		<i>Mathra</i>
<i>Atharvan</i>		<i>Atharvan</i>
<i>Hotar</i>		<i>Zaotar</i>

"These and many other parallels distinctly shew that both the people, known later on as the Hindus and the Iranians, had one religion in common, and we are not wrong if we say that they were one people before they separated." (Pages 19 and 20.)

It is very difficult to locate the date of Zoroaster's birth. It may be anywhere between 600 and 6000 B.C. There are references to Zoroaster's life and teachings in the various books of the ancients, especially of the Greek writers.

There are many legendary stories associated with Zoroaster's life. It is said, when the child was born, there was a smile on his face and a sublime light illuminated his features. It was predicted that the child would grow up into a great spiritual force that would smite the rule of the wicked. The magicians and evil-worshippers therefore plotted to kill it. It was stolen from the house and thrown into a fire. But it was not hurt. It lay unmolested by the scorching flames till its mother came to the spot, prompted by some divine inspiration, and removed it.

On another occasion the child was thrown into a narrow lane, visited by four-footed animals. It lay snugly within the four feet of a gigantic buffalo and thus was saved from being trampled upon and crushed by other animals in the street. The mother, again directed by

some invisible power came to the spot and rescued her child.

On a third occasion the child was stolen and left in a cave to be devoured by wild animals. But it was suckled by a she goat and guarded till again its mother came and took away her precious treasure. How can the plots of the wicked triumph when there is the protecting hand of the Divine Spirit?

There is absolutely nothing strange in the miraculous escape of Zoroaster from death and destruction by the machinations of the wicked. We know from the knowledge of spiritualism that good spirits do intervene to save and protect man from harm and injury. If Zoroaster was so saved in his childhood it should not be considered as a mere myth.

The scholars of *Avesta* tell us that it is difficult to say from the Zoroastrian scriptures when Zoroaster took to meditation. But there are innumerable instances in the *Avesta* books to prove that Zoroaster got revelation from *Hormuzd* through *Behman Amsaspand*—the Good Mind and that the messages which he got from *Hormuzd* were communicated to him by the great angel Gabriel known in the Parsi scriptures as *Sarosh Yazad*. It must have taken many many years of strenuous meditation on the part of Zoroaster and it shows to what extent Zoroaster must have developed his inner soul and consciousness and the power of concentration to have been chosen by God to work as His authorised messenger to spread the new religion which was revealed to him. Just as Christ was preceded by Moses and Abraham, we have ample proof that Zoroaster was preceded by other prophets but of minor importance like Hoam and others. In fact some of the ancient Persian Kings

starting from the 'daya of Gayomard, viz., Hoshang, Tchemuras, Jamshed, Feradun, Kaikaoos and Kaikhushru, are considered to have held communion with God. They were gifted with supernormal powers.

Most of the Zoroastrian scriptural books are missing. It is said that they were burnt when Alexander the Great set fire to the famous library at Persepolis,—a most unforgivable act of vandalism. But the *Gathas*, in whatever fragmentary condition that they have been saved and handed down to us, are the work of Zoroaster himself and some of his disciples. They form the most intrinsic part of the Zoroastrian teaching. They are in verses and the meters used closely resemble the nature of the Vedic hymns. They express philosophical and abstract thoughts. They are a collection of prayers, songs and hymns. The word "*Gatha*" means a song.

In the whole scriptural literature of the world, possibly with the exception of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, there is nothing that can come up to the eminence of thought as contained in the *Gathas*. These *Gathas* contain the very essence of the prophetic utterances of Zoroaster. They are the very gem of the whole scriptural literature of the Parsis. They contain barely 900 lines, divided into five parts, but within a small compass, is found a mine of scriptural knowledge, unique in its nature and which as the first revelation of God to man, may be considered as unsurpassed in its devotional, ethical and philosophical value. They contain religious thoughts and embody very high ethical concepts, which, looking to the time of their origin, must be pronounced as the greatest religious landmark of the world. The hymns are truly human. They are the expression of a surging heart, which has had a vision of God and His Wisdom, and wants to give way to

the inner feelings of joy and praise for *Ahura Mazda*, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient.

The *Gathas* contain the philosophic and ethical teachings of man's redemption and his final absorption in *Ahura Mazda*. There is no reference to mythology or to Vedic or Indo-Aryan gods and goddesses. It is this that gives to the *Gathas* their predominant position. There is not only spiritual and devotional element in the *Gathas*, but they contain also a plea for agricultural reform.

In no religion the question of economics is so mixed up as in the Zoroastrian. This very fact shows that the age, when Zoroaster preached his world-religion, must have been very ancient. It must have been at a time when the nomadic way of life was mostly in existence and that there was very little of agricultural stabilization. The Zoroastrian religion is brimful of references to agriculture. The man who owns a house, a cow, an agricultural plot of land, who works with his hand and ploughs the soil in mid-day sun and sweats and toils and spreads the joy of honest labour, is considered a better man than one, who owns nothing, has no land to plough, no work to do, no earthly ambition, save to lead a nomadic life of utter uselessness.

The *Gathas*, though extremely small, have played a most significant part in moulding the religious thought of the world. They contain in fact all the high philosophic truths, which form the basic teachings in other religions. There is nothing of importance in other scriptures which is not included in the *Gathas*. This is what gives to the *Gathas* a unique position in the scriptural literature of the world. It is the source of divine wisdom. Zoroastrianism has influenced many religions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three greatest Semetic religions of the world.

When Lord Zoroaster got the revelation he was much upset by the sense of his own inability to spread in the world the great message of *Ahura Mazda*. This very fact shows the greatness of his mission. Zoroaster was, however, convinced that, the mission that was entrusted to him was world wide. His faith in *Ahura Mazda*, who had given him the mission to spread it to all mankind, was unflinching. He therefore undertook the mighty work in a most devout and holy spirit, without hesitancy of thought. For was not *Ahura Mazda* his guide and companion in the great task laid upon him?

Zoroastrianism is a world religion. It speaks of righteousness. It shows that life is a battlefield, where good and evil exist, and to fight the evil and to enrich good is the greatest goal of life. Prayers and praises for *Ahura Mazda*, His angels and archangels, His *Amshas-pants* and *Ystas* prayers for and praises of all that is highest in life—truth, righteousness, beauty and glory—form the keynote of the prophet's teaching. Zoroastrianism is described in the *Vendidad*, one of the few scriptural works that was saved from the conflagration and vandalism of non-Iranians as the mightiest tree, overshadowing all other beliefs "just as the sky covers the whole globe."

The *Gathas* form a Niagara of spiritual forces which have vitalised and strengthened human thought and influences for centuries, whose waters have moistened and enlivened the dry bones in the valleys and awakened mankind to a new impulse, a new life.

The *Gathas* contain a Message of Hope. Take for example this stropho of the *Gathas*:

'He That, first of all
Exerted Thought,

And created thereby Centres of light,
 And compounded the principle of Happiness, there-
 with,
 Is indeed, the Creator, beside of Things,
 Of the Righteous Order,
 By the help of His discriminating Wisdom "

(*Yasna XXXI, 7, The Religion of Zarathushtra* by
 Sohrab J. Bulsara, page 110)

As the learned acholar, Mr Bulsara, interprets the above lines, God first exerted Thought, then created Centres of Light, to manifest Spirits in Matter and infused into these Centres the rays or principles of happiness. Life is a union of Matter and Spirit. Life is meant for Happiness. But Happiness comes only by way of Righteousness and by no other way. Evil has to be destroyed, prop by prop stage by stage, step by step, ever and anon to achieve human perfection. The Kingdom of God is a happy state of virtuousness. It is the Excellence of Righteousness. It is the purity of Mind. It is Divine Bliss.

When Zoroaster began his mission the people believed in rituals and sacrificial offerings. Zoroaster taught that true religion was of the heart. He enjoined upon his followers to worship *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahura Mazda* alone, for He was the unsurpassed Creator of the universe, One without a Second, the Revealer and the Redeemer. Zoroaster called his religion *Beh-Daena*. *Daena* in Avesta means religion and *Beh* means good. *Mazdayasni* Faith, as established by Zoroaster, is described as good religion, true religion. It is the purifying faith.

Its main essence or pillar is the trio of Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good deeds.

Aevo pantao yo ashahe.

Vispe anyesham e pantam.

"There is but One Straight Path of Right.

All other ways are no ways."

The *Sadra* and *Kusti*, which every follower of the Zoroastrian faith is enjoined to put on, are emblematical. The *Sadra*, or truly speaking, *Vastra* is the Garment of Good Mind and the *Kusti* is the Girdle of faith. They form the impregnable fortress against the intrusion of evil in life.

Ashoi or Righteousness is the foundation stone of Zoroastrianism. Each one has to practise the law of *Ashoi* from his or her very childhood. "To grow in *Ashoi* from birth, all things it excels!" (*Yasna* 48.5.) This is the main teaching of the *Gathas*. *Ahura Mazda* with his six *Amesha-Spentas* rules the universe. The six *Amesha-Spentas* are *Ahura Mazda's* attributes. They are called:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. <i>Vohu Mano</i> | Good Mind |
| 2. <i>Asha Vahista</i> | Absolute Truth |
| 3. <i>Khstra Vairya</i> | Self-control |
| 4. <i>Spenta Armaiti</i> | Devotion |
| 5. <i>Ahurvatat</i> | Well-being of the Soul |
| 6. <i>Amertat</i> | Immortality of the Soul |

The nature of *Ahura Mazda* is most beautifully described in the *Gathas*. *Ahura* means Ruler and *Mazda* means Creator or Dispenser. He rules the universe with the law of Order, Truth and Justice. He is called *Vahista-Manangah*, Best Mind, because He rules with best Mind or Reason. He is called *Asha-hazaosha*, because Law of Truth is His sceptre. He is called *Ashat-Apnotemem*, the great worker in the Realm of Truth. He is all goodness, *Spenta-Masnyu*. He is the Creator of both light and darkness. It does not mean because He is the Creator of

darkness, He is the Creator of evil. Good and Evil exist in life, but *Ahura Mazda* wishes man, whom He has created to make use of his free will, to shun evil and espouse the cause of righteousness. He has given to man the same spiritual forces, with which He is endowed,—though in a very small measure, so that man may also rule with quietude and in happiness,—the small realm in which he is created. In fact, Zoroastrianism preaches the same doctrine, which we find so prominently laid down in other religions, namely, that man is God and God is man. The spiritual powers of *Ahura Mazda* are infinitely great. And He in His divine mercy and love and grace has created man and given his soul the same opportunities to reach that perfection, which is *Ahura Mazda's*. It is by the daily practice of the law of Truth and Righteousness, Justice and Purity, Good Reason and Self control that we can reach the perfection of *Ahura Mazda*.

" All happy States of Life, which were and are and will be,
Bestow on me, O Mazd, out of Thy Love thro' purest
Thought and Truth, thro' Spiritual strength and
Wealth of Good Mind
Truly within me Cause to be,—Thy sweet Dominion!"

(Y 33 10)

Active opposition to evil is enjoined in the *Gathas*. It is only the foolish who choose the wrong path. The wise tread the path of Righteousness for it is by practice of truth alone that *Behest*, which is the goal of man in the 'Life Beyond', which is the real world, can be attained. This is the nearest prayer in the *Gathas* to *Ahura Mazda*.

"O Wisest One! Thro' Good-Mind of Crystal
purity,

Teach me to understand and know Thee, all-in-
all!

Richest blessings of Thine Earthly-World, and
of

Thine other-blest, which can be gain'd by Truth
give me!"

(*Ahunaavad Gatha-ha 28.*)

It would not be wroog to say that the *Gathas* offer a
combioation of *Gnana Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and *Bakhti Yoga*.
To all intents and purposes, one sees great affinity be-
tween the teachings of Hindu scriptures and Zoroaster's
Gathas. Zoroaster was the greatest mystic that the world
has produced. It is no wonder Zoroastrianism later on
influenced Sufism to a remarkable extent in Iran and
other countries in the East. Zarthustra considered him-
self the friend of *Ahura Mazda*. What does that mean?
It means that he must have risen by his prayers, earnest
devotion, meditation, a true life of renunciation and that
of active service, to the most exalted and supreme state
of human perfection. Thus having purified himself, he
was made fit by God to understand the mysteries of life
and the significance of the universe and the problems
arising out of it. He was in fact the first Prophet to
spread the message of Divine Revelation to mankind.
The message of Zoroaster is significant in this, that it
does not appeal to any one sect or race. Its universality
is the most important feature of this religion. The Gospel
of Zoroaster does not divide men into Iranians or non-
Iranians, Aryans or non-Aryans. The whole world is its
stage, the whole mankind the audience. The truths are
simple, as could be grasped by peoples of the time, who

were not advanced in learning or knowledge, whose morality was of questionable type and whose notions of life were almost crude and undeveloped. To have given a universal character to the message, which Zoroaster received from *Ahura Mazda*, speaks volumes. His deep and sublime humility, his inspired teaching and his great spirituality are discernible by a study of the religion, which the great founder established at the grey dawn of history in the country of Iran.

We have said in the foregoing pages that in the *Gathas* we get a clear conception of *Ahura Mazda*, as the Absolute Ruler of the universe. He is One without a Second. And yet criticism has been levelled against Zoroastrianism that it preaches dualism. This dualism that is pointed out is ethical and scientific but not metaphysical. Zoroastrianism is the most ethical religion of the world. Zoroaster, to the vast assemblages that meet to hear him, speaks of the message received from *Ahura Mazda*, not once but a hundred times, laying the greatest emphasis on this fact, that the world is a theatre of Cosmic War between two Spirits. *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu*. *Spenta Mainyu* is the Spirit of Good. *Angra Mainyu* is the Spirit of Evil. His sole idea in attributing good and evil to the working of the two spirits, who may be considered as equal in weight and importance, is to magnify the necessity to shun evil and espouse good. *Angra Mainyu's* forces are relentless. Joining the forces of *Angra Mainyu* means certain destruction and death. It means fires of hell. It means poignant grief, misery and suffering. It means damnation beyond repair. Such a teaching at a time when there were constant feuds and clashes when the necessity of smiting evil at any cost appeared the strongest was most beneficial. But in no other sense can the charge of dualism be level-

led against Zoroastrianism, as the *Gathas* amply give proof of Zoroaster having got his revelation from *Ahura Mazda*, the Supreme Spirit, One without a Second. In fact, there are many passages, which can be pointed out, which prove that *Ahura Mazda* has so designed the universe and its laws, that man will overcome evil in the end and the power of *Angra Mainyu* shall eventually disappear for all times.

Angra Mainyu in the *Gathas* is described as in opposition to *Spenta Mainyu*, the Holy Spirit of *Ahura Mazda*. Owing to the fact that in the later *Avesta* the distinction between *Ahura Mazda* and *Spenta Mainyu* is not maintained, the conception of the absolute supremacy of *Ahura Mazda* dwindles into the background. It appears therefore that the fight is between two co-equal spirits, *Spenta Mainyu* identified with *Ahura Mazda* and *Angra Mainyu*. But *Angra Mainyu*, even if he be mistakenly represented as co-equal with *Ahura Mazda*, is not co-eternal and his ultimate annihilation is predicted. The sole ideal of the teaching of Zoroastrianism is man's eventual redemption from sin and his immersion in the glory of God—*Ahura Mazda*. The whole philosophy is highly optimistic. The imperfect man shall see the folly of choosing evil. He shall suffer, pay heavily for his folly but eventually, through his suffering and repentance, he shall come back to truth and righteousness. The ultimate triumph of good over evil, the final extinction of sin from the earth is postulated. The doctrine of free-will preached in the religion is the lever, the fulcrum, the basic foundation of the whole philosophy of life. *Angra Mainyu* is symbolic of man's ignorance, blindness. It is the essence of evil. *Angra Mainyu* is not a fallen angel, as described in the Bible of the Christians. He is a "Demon of demons", destroyer of the world, originator

of disorder, disease and death, promulgator of physical and moral imperfections, the king of fiends and arch-fiends, *devas* and *drujas*. But the final defeat of *Ahremen* and his evil progeny is indicated. The importance of *Angra Mainyu* and *Ahura Mazda's* final triumph are the two salient features of the whole drama.

Those who persist in running down Zoroastrianism as a system of dualistic thought, do the greatest injustice to Zoroaster, the first prophet of historic personality, who gave to the world a monotheistic religion.

There is such a dynamic significance in the word *Ahura Mazda* as we do not see in any other word for the Supreme Being. The Hindus call *Brahman*, *Sat Chit-Ananda*, Absolute Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, but it has hardly the vigour and vitality of the expression used by Zarthustra, for the Supreme Being, *Ahura Mazda*, the Wise Ruler.

Zend is the language in which the scriptural books of the Parsis were originally written and *Avesta* is the scriptural lore they contain. Like the Sanscrit word *Veda*, *Avesta* means, 'Wisdom', 'Knowledge'. The prayer *Ahunavar* which forms the essential part of the Zoroastrian teaching and which Zoroaster is said to have first received from *Ahura Mazda* direct contains 21 words and originally 21 *nusks* or books corresponding with the 21 words of *Ahuna Vairya* were written, when the religion was founded by Zoroaster. They comprise various subjects. The original work was not therefore purely religious but encyclopaedic in character. We give below the subjects treated in the *Nusks*.

- I Virtue and piety.
- II Religious observances.
- III Exegetical—the three chief prayers of the religion being explained in it.

- IV. Cosmogeny.
- V. Astronomy and astrology.
- VI. Performance of the ritual and the benefit to be derived therefrom.
- VII. Qualifications and duties of the priest.
- VIII. Ethical consideration and various aspects of human life.
- IX. Directions for various ceremonies,
- X. Conversion and instruction of King Gustasp and his wars with Arjasp.
- XI. Various religious and worldly duties.
- XII. An account of mankind from the creation of primeval man to the advent of Zoroaster.
- XIII. An account of Zoroaster and the Saviour that is to come.
- XIV. Worship of *Ahura Mazda* and His archangels.
- XV. Dispensing of justice and various laws.
- XVI. Criminal, civil and military law.
- XVII. Priestly and ritual code.
- XVIII. Law of property and family relations.
- XIX. *Vendidad*—Pollution and Purification.
- XX. Religious duties, good attributes and qualities.
- XXI. *Praise of Ahura Mazda and His archangels.*

It is said one "sumptuous copy" was preserved at Persepolis and another at Samarkand. But both of them were burnt when Alexander the Great annexed Persepolis and Samarkand. Such was the unfortunate fate of the most ancient scriptures of the world. But the work of collecting scattered remnants was started in the days of Ardeshir Babkan and putting what was known by

mouth in writing was also undertaken. By the time of Shapur II, we find some collection made ready. But the worst depredation was when Yazdagard III was defeated at the battle of Nehavend in the year 642 and the Muhammadans overran Iran.

The books extant are

(i) *Yasnas*, (ii) *Gathas*, (iii) *Visparad*, (iv) *Yashts*, (v) Some Minor Texts, (vi) *Vendidad* and (vii) Some Fragments.

The religion of Zoroaster began to fade after the fall of Yazdagard III when Muhammadans became rulers of Iran. They converted the defeated people by force to Islam. Some who left the country braved danger and came to India. They formed the first batch of Pilgrim Fathers. When they landed at Sanjan their chieftain, Nariosang Dhaval, pleaded with the Rana to give them a refuge. Had they not—Hindus and Iranians—lived together as Aryans some 5,000 years ago? He repeated 16 *slokas* in Sanskrit of which the first is as under

Suryam dhyayanti ye vai kutvahanamitam bhummakasha-
madhyam

To yo sampanchatatvam tribhuvana sadanam nyasa-
mantrastrisandhyam

Shrihormishram suresham bahugunagaribhajam tame-
kam kripalum

Gauraveetrassuveera bahubalanilaya steyayam para-
seekah

“We pay our obeisance to the sun the five elements and the universe. We worship *Ahura Mazda* of many attributes. He is the Creator and Lord of the Universe. He is Merciful. We worship Him and because of that we Parsis are a strong, virile race of fair men and women, virtuous, industrious and steady.”

The Rana was much moved. The Pilgrim Fathers were accorded a hospitable home and thus the remnant of the great following of Zoroaster, after many hardships and sufferings, commenced a new career in the hospitable country of India, which they have adopted as their own motherland after their exile from Iran. They number to-day a little more than a hundred thousand. The books and manuscripts saved from destruction were guarded by the priests as the most holy relics.

Nothing was known of this religion to the western scholars till the middle of the 18th century. The credit of translating *Zend-Avesta* and making the religion known in Europe goes to Anquetil Duperron. He came to India after a hazardous journey, working as a common sailor on a French boat. It was difficult to get access to the valuable manuscripts, which the priests would not part for love or money. He however succeeded in the end in getting them. He learnt the Avesta and Zend languages and brought the translations home in triumph. He was followed by other savants in Europe and it was thus that western scholarship made its mark in the field of Zoroastrianism.

In the foregoing pages, we have already discussed the *Gathas*, which form the most intrinsic part of Zoroaster's utterances. *Ahuna-Vairya* is considered to be the most sacred formula and it is repeated several times in all the Parsi prayers. Zarathustra asked *Ahura Mazda* "O *Ahura Mazda*, most munificent spirit, Creator of the settlements supplied with creatures, righteous one which was the word, O *Ahura Mazda*, that thou speakest unto me, which was before the heavens, before the water, before the earth, before the animals, before the trees before the fire, son of *Ahura Mazda*, before the righteous men, before the demons and savage men (cannibals),

before the whole material world, before all good things created by *Ahura Mazda*, that are of rightful origin?" Then said *Ahura Mazda* "This was the part of *Ahuna Vairya*, O Spitma Zarathustra, which I spake unto thee. And whoever in this my world supplied with creatures, O, Spitma Zarathustra! shall recall mentally one part of the *Ahuna Vairya* or in the course of recalling shall mutter it, or in course of muttering shall chant it or in the course of chanting, pray to it, his soul will I, who am *Ahura Mazda*, carry all the three times over the bridge to paradise (*Vashistem Ahum*) to the best life, to the best righteousness, to the best luminaries."

What is the duty of the righteous man? To thing rightly, to speak rightly, to act rightly, to appoint a spiritual guide, to fulfil all religious duties. This most famous *Ahuna Vairya*, which *Ahura Mazda* first breathed to Zoroaster is variously translated by various scholars. We give below Prof Darmester's translation

'The desire of the Lord is the rule of the Good The blessings of *Vohu Mano* are with those who do good works in this world for the Lord *Ahura* The Lord makes him rule who protects the poor "

There are two thoughts embodied in this most beautiful teaching of *Ahuna Vairya* The first and foremost is that of righteousness Purity of thought, word and deed, *Humata, Hukhta Hvarashta, Manasni, Gavasni, Kumasni*, is continuously emphasised in the Zoroastrian teaching. It is this righteousness which must lead man to perfection of character But righteousness alone is not enough. We form one human family with *Ahura Mazda* as our Lord Some of us are better placed in life others not. Those who are poor whether in wealth or knowledge, are to be protected, guided, helped and assisted Their burden is to be lightened Their mind is to be enlightened.

This is the duty imposed upon every Zoroastrian. It is no wonder therefore that the small community of Parsis that follows the Zoroastrian faith is known the world over for its cosmopolitan charities and culture.

Another *Maha Vakya* in the Avestan prayers is *Ashem Vohu*. The following is the literal translation: "Righteousness is the most excellent blessing and is bliss (full); bliss (is) to him who is holy for the sake of best righteousness." Most of us pray to God that He in His bounty and grace may shower upon us all the good things of life, health and wealth, fame and name, good children and all the enjoyments of the world. This is a very poor ideal to ask for some material reward. To work for the sake of work without expectation of any return or fruit, to pursue truth for the sake of truth, to do one's duty for the sake of duty, this is the highest ideal which any religion can place before us. This is the ideal preached in the *Yoga* system of the Hindus also.

Man's activities in life are actuated by two motives, one to satisfy his own desires and the other to do duty for the sake of duty. One object is mundane; the other object is spiritual. One satisfies the lower mind; the other uplifts the higher mind. One desire begets another desire and the poor man weaves his life in a web of desires, which far from bringing him happiness enchains him and encrusts him in a never-ending wheel of illusion and restlessness. But when the object is an unquenchable thirst for truth, to do good for the sake of good, man is lifted to a spiritual atmosphere. The cosmic forces become his guardian angels, his creative powers, his evolutionary instruments and invisibly or visibly he becomes a source of great happiness to himself and to others. It is when the road is thorny and narrow, when the path is difficult and fraught with dangers, courage is wanted and that

courage is supplied by that manner monitor, conscience. We know in history how men for the sake of truth and righteousness, for the sake of their ideal, have given up their lives. We know of so many martyrs. Socrates preferred to drink the cup of poison to forego the pursuit of teaching the youth of Athens on the lines of his own ideal morality. Christ was crucified, but if he had but hinted at his desire to escape such a destiny, he would have survived the scorn and sniffs of the people of his time, and lived long beloved and honoured by them. But he scorned such an easy path. His vision was larger. His purpose was to spread the message of truth for the sake of truth, for the sake of righteousness, for the sake of perfection of human life. And so the sacrifice of his own life in pursuit of that ideal was nothing. We know today the value and example of the great teaching of Christ, the great teaching of Socrates.

Zarthusstra's teaching of *Ashem Vohu*, to do good for the sake of good, at a time when people were steeped in ignorance, bespeaks of the great sublimity of his thought. He was indeed a forerunner to the many schools and cults of philosophy and religion which took their inspiration from Zarthusstra.

'Perfect love casteth out fear,' said Christ and this love is included in the teaching of Zarthusstra's *Ashoi*. He who is righteous for the sake of righteousness, is fearless. He is loving, he is kind, he is sympathetic, he is compassionate. He knows, understands and feels the unity of life and it is therefore that he is fearless. He knows that he is part and parcel of *Ahura Mazda*, and as such, he insists upon following the path of righteousness and righteousness only, not for the ulterior motive of gaining any reward in heaven above after death, but for

the sake of righteousness to help in the work of *Ahura Mazda's* plan for the evolution of whole mankind. This Zoroastrian teaching of *Ashos* corresponds with the teaching in the *Bhagvad-Gita*

'He that performest such action as his duty, independently of the fruit of action, he is a *yogi*.' (VI 1)

Ashos signifies complete fulfilment of all moral obligations and practice of all moral virtues without expectation of any return or reward. In this respect we have shown that it corresponds with the Hindu ideal of *Yoga*. But there is one difference between the Zoroastrian philosophy of righteousness and the *Yoga* of the Hindus. Zoroaster emphasises the duty of working in human society for its welfare and happiness. It eschews the idea of shunning the world and leading a life of meditation, asceticism and renunciation. *Ahura Mazda* is pleased with the man and strengthens his *Farvash* only when he is busily active in life and serves others without any thought of self. Not running away to the forest, but leading a busy life in the very midst of the tyranny of conflicting voices and sounds, tears and smiles, loves and hatreds, agony and bliss, pain and pleasure is the ideal set forth by Zarthustra.

We should think both the ideals are correct. If a man can renounce in the truest essence of the word while living in the whirlpool of giddy currents and cross-currents of human activity and maintain a perfect mental equipoise which is so necessary in true renunciation, the Zoroastrian ideal of life is the sublimest teaching indeed. But the question is whether man can achieve such an ideal living in the midst of a mundane world surrounded by pitfalls and mad attractions and attached to desires. To live in the world, to rear a family means enslaving oneself to desires and however much you may demand of

Hatem is another *Maha Vakya*, like the *Ahunavar* and *Ahem Vohu*. It refers to the necessity of remembering and coming into contact with those who are holy and saintly in life. For they are the most beloved to *Ahura Mazda*. There is a very significant passage in the *Avesta*. Zarthustra is said to be sitting near *Ahura Mazda*. He asks *Ahura Mazda* to show him his head, foot, hair, face and tongue. He tells Him: "Give me Thine hand to hold." *Ahura Mazda* tells him: "I am invisible. I cannot be held." Zarthustra then says, "If Thou cannot be held by the hand and I return after leaving Thee and can no longer behold Thee, whom shall I see?" Then *Ahura Mazda* replies: "Listen what I tell you, Oh Spitaman Zarthustral What I, *Ahura Mazda*, am (in the spiritual and other worlds) My holy man is on earth. Whosoever on this material plane wishes to propitiate Lord *Ahura Mazda*, to further the Lord's things, who so desires that Lord *Ahura Mazda* might always and at all points remain with him, he must propitiate the holy man by every means possible." To serve the saints is to serve *Ahura Mazda*. This reminds us of the high place and reverence given in the *Vedic* scriptures to *gurus*. The true *guru* is one, who has developed spiritual qualities and to serve him is the means of achieving spiritual enlightenment, spiritual joy. Without a *guru*, who is held in much greater love and reverence than even one's own father or mother, it is not possible for any one to realise God.

The following is the *Avesta* text of *Yenghe Hatam* prayer and its translation:

*Yenhe hatam add, yesne paiti,
vangho mazdau ahuro vaetha, ashed haka,
yaunghamka, taska, tauska yavamaide.*

"Of the living ones, whosoever is better in the adoration, whether man or woman, is known to

Ahura Mazda because of his or her righteousness (and) with him or her we attune ourselves "

The principal aim of *Ahura Mazda*, according to Zoroastrianism, is to so evolve the world as to create perfection in life and this work is to be done through man, His highest creation. The holy men the saintly men, those who dedicate their lives for human service, forgetting self, are the most beloved of *Ahura Mazda*, for they are the architects, the engineers the master craftsmen, who are constructing the Kingdom of *Ahura Mazda*, according to His plan and judgment.

Ahura Mazda is the voice of conscience *Ahura Mazda* is Rectitude. The following lines from the *Gathas* are pertinent

' *Ahura Mazda*, teach us Rectitude through the dictate of conscience whose first revealer Thou art " (Gatha 51-3)

' The straight path of Rectitude,

Wherein lies *Mazda* the Lord " (Gatha 33 5)

The righteous man is not only the engineer who is building the Kingdom of *Ahura Mazda* on earth. He is a warrior, according to Zoroastrianism, for he has to fight evil and clean the field of all the stubbles and poisonous growths.

Stern duty is the highest ideal placed before us by Zoroaster and the Zoroastrian saints who are to be loved and venerated are all men of action and determination. Each religion has separate ideas as to what constitutes a man's saintliness. Hinduism and Buddhism give preponderance to asceticism. Zoroastrianism is poles apart from both Hinduism and Buddhism in its conception of the highest ideal. It teaches active service, not inaction, determination to conquer evil at all costs,

not mere renunciation. It recognises self-conquest as the highest victory.

But the fact remains, that every religion lays stress upon the adoration of those who are saintly in life. Christianity has copied from Zoroastrianism this teaching of saint-service. According to Christians, the following are held in great adoration and reverence (They consider them as their own guardian angels): Saint Paul, Mathew, Luke, Saint Patrick, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Margaret, St. Catherine, etc.

The Hindu saints whose lives are read with great interest and reverence and who are adored and remembered with feelings of sanctity are: Manu, Kabir, Prahlad, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Mirabai, Narsing Mehta, Harischandra, Vasishtha, Valmiki and so forth. The immortal Soshyants according to Zoroastrian conception are: Homa, Kaikhushru, Peshotan, son of Shah Gustasp, Yeusto Frian, Yakhya Yasud, Fradhakhsht Ashavazang, Agrerath, brother of Afrasayab, Urvatat, a son of Zarthustra, Narsing, brother of Jamshed, Tusa, son of Nadar, Geva, son of Godrej and so forth.

Man is made of two parts. As St. Augustine said, man has two bodies, the physical and spiritual. The physical body is made of flesh and blood. The spiritual body, *i.e.*, the Higher Mind consists of *Buddhi*, *Ravan* and *Farohar*. *Ravan* or *Urvan* is equivalent to soul or *atman* in the Hindu scriptures. *Farohar* is the spark of *Akura Mazda*, sent to earth to fight *druj*. The soul or *Ravan* is the spiritual body of this *Farohar*, better called Spirit.

Every man has a *Farohar* and *Ravan*. The Vegetable Kingdom has a *Farohar* but no tree or plant has any *Ravan*. *Ravan* or soul is held responsible for its actions. Its place in the other world, after the disruption of the

human physical body, depends upon its good or bad actions in life. When it journeys from the perishable to the imperishable life, it enters first into the paradise of *Humata* (good thoughts) then it advances and enters into the paradise of *Hukhta* (good words) and then it advances and enters into the paradise of *Huvarshita* (good actions). Eventually the soul of the righteous man gets a place in the highest heaven with the eternal luminaries. Such is the destiny of the soul, adjudged as righteous at the *Chinvat Bridge*. But the fate of the impure soul, of the wicked man, is different. It passes through terrors and stench. It stumbles in darkness and gloom. Evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds haunt the wicked soul every moment in its downward journey of despair and destruction.

Ravan or soul is thus held responsible for its actions. But the work of *Fravashis* is only to protect man from evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds. It is the creative, progressive and evolutionary element in the spiritual man. It is his guardian angel. When a man dies, as we have said, the *Ravan* or *Atman* or the soul has to suffer for its bad actions in life. But *Fravashis* is independent of such suffering. It returns to *Ahura Mazda*, its original home. *Fravashis* are considered to be emanations or the sparks of *Ahura Mazda*. The soul must also return to *Ahura Mazda* and be eventually immersed in Him, which stage may arrive after aeons of time and countless births, but it must taste the fruit of its actions on earth, whether good or bad, pleasant or bitter, before the final immersion takes place in the ocean of God. *Fravashis* are described in *Yasna* 38, as "daughters" of Lord *Ahura Mazda*. Their work is to help mankind to accelerate the progress of virtue, to protect children, to continue the good work of Evolution and Creation. The

Fravashis of good and pure men whether living or dead or even those to be born are always invoked They are a source of comfort enlightenment strength and inspiration They are spiritual existences which were brought into being even before *Ahura Mazda* created the universe They should not be mixed up with the souls of the dead

Every being has a *Fravashi* whether a man or a woman a plant or an animal The *Fravashis* of the Vegetable Kingdom render assistance in the growth of that Kingdom The *Fravashis* of men help men in establishing the Kingdom of Righteousness They thus render both physical and spiritual assistance according to the spheres in which they operate whether animate or inanimate objects

The word *Fravashi* is derived from *Fra* meaning 'Forward' It is also derived from the Sanskrit word *Vardha* which means *Vradhi* or increase *Fravashis* are the creators of prosperity and happiness

As we have said every being has its own *Fravashi* Even Lord *Ahura Mazda* has His *Fravashi* The Earth, the Sun the Sky the Water the Fire the Plant the blessed Angels in heaven and Animals on earth have their *Fravashis* The *Fravashis* sustain the universe We get a very beautiful idea of the immanence of *Ahura Mazda* through this Zoroastrian concept of *Farohars* The *Fravashis* or *Farohars* of the living holy men are more powerful than the dead Why? Because it is purity in action *Ahura Mazda* is the essence of purity To be one with *Ahura Mazda* means to practise a life of daily purity in thought word and deed This is the *mantra* which the Zoroastrian religion gives to the world Righteousness alone leads man to sovereign power and place It means ultimate union with the Creator of the universe *Ahura Mazda* — oneness with God

The followers of the Zoroastrian faith are sometimes abused as fire-worshippers. This is an extremely unfair criticism. Fire is the symbol of *Ahura Mazda*. It is the most purifying element in the universe. It is the highest manifestation of God. To pray to *Ahura Mazda*, concentrating one's mind on fire, which is the highest aspect, the very light and garment of the all-pervading Spirit is not fire-worshipping but God-worshipping. Those famous lines of Firdosī are a direct reply to the calumniators

مگو که آتش پرستان بودند .
آتش پرستان نیست پاک بر دامن بودند .

* Don't say, they are fire worshippers. They are not fire-worshippers, but worshippers of God *

Among the ancients, fire was held in great veneration. It was symbolic of God. The Egyptians, the Romans and the Grecians consecrated their fires in public halls and in their hearths at home and never allowed them to die. The Romans looked upon fire as the link between man and God and if fire at any time was extinguished, it was held as an omen of great catastrophe, for it meant to them that the loving link between man and God had snapped. Such was their veneration for fire. The Greeks, when they left their homeland, always made it a point to carry the live coals from the burning fire of the public altar for consecrating it in their new colony.

Fire is most reverentially spoken of in all the scriptures of the world. We shall refer to this aspect of resemblance in all the scriptural teachings in a later chapter, when we deal with the question of the fundamental points of unity in the various religious teachings of the world.

Fire is looked upon in the *Avesta* as Son *Ahura Mazda*. Just as the outer fire burns away impurities, in the same

manner the inner fire in man should burn away all evil thoughts and evil passions. Fire is the essence of purity. It is the source of power. It is the fountain-head of action and sacrifice. It is the cause of action. The highest means of contemplating *Mazda* is by fixing one's mental gaze on a stream of fire, emanating from one's own heart, soaring upwards. They say light travels at the rate of 186 204 miles in a second. Is there any thing more wondrous? To kindle the lamp of *Ahura Mazda* in one's heart and mind, to worship Him through the flaming robe of *Ahura Mazda's* greatest and best creation in the universe is to worship Him in the holiest spirit and in fulness of heart. We quote below the remarks of some of the eminent scholars to repudiate the charge of fire-worship as idol worship among the Parsis. The most Reverend Dr. Leo Meurin in his book, *Zoroaster and Christ* says, "I am very far from supposing that the Parsee fire-worship is idolatry. Whoever accuses the Parsees of that most heinous of all crimes and is not able to prove that they believe fire or sun to be God Himself is certainly guilty of the most detestable sin of calumny. Zoroaster restored not only the unity of God, but also the most ancient and characteristic Aryan form of divine service the worship of Fire as the most suitable representative of God, corresponding to their high idea of God as Eternal Light. A pure and undefiled flame is certainly the most sublime and natural representation of Him who is in Himself Eternal Light and whose priests, as His representative on earth, ought to be in themselves, as it were living and walking pure flames of a heavenly fire. I am unable to express in words the deep and vehement feelings which move my heart when I kneel in the sanctuary of my Chapel and think of the Parsee fire-temple a few yards off, in which a fire is ever burning like the flame in our sanctuary lamp."

The following is the vision of Prof J Darmesteter 'Abhorring images and idolatry they worshipped God only under the symbol of fire They considered fire as the symbol and the residence of the divine nature but not as the divine nature itself The sun being the purest and most perfect fire as well as the noblest production of the Deity they regarded as the visible throne of the Deity and the *Shekinah* of the divine presence Hence, in praying their adorations they turned their faces towards this luminary called by them the *Mithra*, particularly at the time of rising The sun, however was no more than the *Kebla* or point of adoration to the Persians, as the Temple of Jerusalem was to the Jews or the city of Mecca to the Mohammedans It is certain that the religion of the Persians continued to be infinitely superior to the gross superstitions of their idolatrous neighbours. Adoring one God they believed Him to be omnipresent and held it impious and profane to represent the invisible Majesty of Heaven by images or statues or to circumscribe the Lord of the Universe within the boundaries of a temple Actuated by a zeal against idolatry they overturned the religious monuments and edifices of the Greeks as unworthy of the Deity After the lapse of so many centuries the revolutions of Empire and the fall of the nations the religion of Zoroaster is still preserved in the East in its purity and the modern Parsees adore the same object of worship with the same rites and ceremonies as was done by their forefathers in the times of Darius Hystaspis

Zarthusra was not an intellectual genius We pay our homage to him as generations of men in the past have done and generations in the future will do because the religious teaching which he imbibed direct from *Ahura Mazda* through the potency of the spirit within him has

stood the test of time for centuries past and will continue for aeons of years till the new *Soshyant* of which the scriptures predict comes again to give a new lease of religious life to the people of the world. It is most unfortunate that this religion is followed to day by a mere handful of Parsis. There is a greater reason therefore that Zoroastrianism which influenced some of the greatest religions of the world should be studied all the more and its teachings brought more prominently to the notice of the world. What little that we have written on this subject and however feeble the attempt may be should still indicate the sublimity of the Zoroastrian faith and the necessity of its study by a much larger section of the people of the world.

Dr L. H. Mills the greatest authority on the *Gathas*, says "Not even in the Old Testament and hardly in the New have we such delineations of God." This description of *Ahura Mazda* is the result of Zoroaster's own spiritual experiences and as such Zoroastrianism should have a paramount and permanent place in the religious history of the world. It teaches oneness with God.

Christianity

When one reads the life of Jesus Christ the God-man the village carpenter about the sufferings the trials and humiliations which this sinless man passed through his humility his poverty, his simplicity his gentility his great love his forgiveness, his devotion to the poor and sinners alike dining with publicans healing lepers preaching to the masses in the language of parables his final trial crucifixion and resurrection the great miracles he performed to prove his divine origin and powers one feels bewildered that when such a man the very incarnation of God was sent to absolve the world from its sin-

fulness and inspite of the fact that one third of the human race today professes Christianity as its religion there is so very little of it in this world The following is Christ's main teaching

Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile go with him twain Give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away Ye have heard that was said thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy but I say unto you *love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you*

Our wars belie the teachings of Christ The ten commandments of Christ are honoured more in their breach than in their observance Where is that great love which Christ preached and practised? Love thy neighbour as thyself said the Messiah Love of God love of man love of every being on earth—this was the doctrine which the great founder of Christianity preached The wars to day show that there is more of hatred than love in Christdom

The coming of Christ the incarnation of God was prophesied at the very dawn of civilization Jesus is a Hebrew word which means Jehovah of salvation Christ is a Greek word, meaning the annointed one Tacitus considered the teaching of Christ as a deadly superstition Christ started his mission with only a few followers John the Baptist said Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world Christ showed his supernatural powers first at the feast of Cana in Galilee turning water into wine When there was a storm



JESUS CHRIST

with remorse he takes his vengeance on the Jews. When they take Christ for crucifixion he puts at the head of Christ's Cross 'The King of Jews'. Christ refuses to take the deadening potion before he is crucified. He prefers to die in mortal agony and pain. As each nail is driven into his mortal flesh he thinks of the sinners and prays to God to forgive them. This heroic death of Christ at the Cross makes a deep impression upon the crowd. They are seized after his death with a feeling of guilt and remorse. Their heart is filled with a presentiment of future retribution.

Christ is said to have wept four times in his life. First when Lazarus died. Mary and Martha wept and Christ wept also out of the fulness of his heart. 'Weeping is no weakness, it is the overflow of strong love.'

The second time that he wept was when he made the final triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The poor gave him an enthusiastic reception—not the rich nor the learned. And Christ wept for those who had persecuted him and for the terrible fate that awaited them in the future.

The third time that he wept was when the twelve apostles whom he had loved from the very bottom of his heart and who were dearer to him than others, forsook him. But when he wept on the Cross it was in the agony of despair. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" These words were the utterance of a broken heart. But it was in the mortal agony of that bitter hour that the Christ soul was seeking *rapprochement* with the Eternity. The Self was forging the bonds of union with the Overself.

The greatest phenomenon that convinced the people of the spirituality of Christ was that he showed himself

to his apostles and others for 40 days continuously after the first Easter day. Thus passed away Christ, who is claimed by his followers as the only perfected man. "The only begotten Son of God manifest in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed in the world, received up into glory"

Christ's love for sinners shone like a purifying sun through the dark clouds of the sky. The greatest legacy he has left to mankind is the great teaching of love. Even when he is crucified along with two robbers he listens to them and promises to them his love and grace. He loves even his murderers, for he prays for them to the last. Such was the infinite love of this great Christ for all mankind.

Whatever be the perfection of Christ's life on earth, to contend however that Christianity is the only religion of the world and that other religions—in spite of the fact that there are grains of truth in them—are imperfect, is to reveal one's weakness for self glorification. There is no justification whatsoever for the proselytising ardour of the Christian missionaries in India and other countries of the world. India's traditions of religion come from a hoary past. Swami Vivekananda, when he went to America as a representative of India to attend the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago, exposed the hollowness of the claim of Christian missionaries to teach religion to India, the home and centre of the highest spiritual thought in the world. He gave such a remarkable demonstration of the Vedantic philosophy and religion of ancient India that America was stirred to the very depth and it saw the futility of wasting time, money and energy on the barren pursuit of proselytising Indian people into Christianity.

The Brahmo Samajists include Christianity in their teaching but it is the Oriental Christ that they worship

Keshub Chandra Sen, the Brahmo leader, described Christ's mission thus "Sent by Providence to reform and regenerate mankind, he received from Providence power and wisdom for that great work." Keshub took great pride and his love and devotion for Christ were intensified, he said by the knowledge that Christ was an Asiatic But he took great objection to revere Christ as a Western Christ He refused to bow before a foreign Christ What he resisted was a foreign Christianity subverting Hindu society. This he held as contrary to the true spirit of Christianity Christ in the West appeared to him as "lifeless form and antiquated symbol" Christ in the East was the true inspiring Christ The two most beautiful thoughts that we gather from the Oriental Christ are when Christ compares himself with God "I and my Father are one" and when he says "Abide in me and I in you"

Christ was a God-man His life is a singular exposition of how a man can develop his inner consciousness to become ONE WITH GOD.

Christ was the prince of idealists Christianity as preached by Christ and not as followed by his countless followers to-day in the West is supreme idealism 'And it is in this idealism that India has a hold on the real nature of Christ and Christianity," says P C Mozoomdar in his book, *The Oriental Christ*. Christ lived in God, loved in God, taught in God suffered in God that we too might live and love suffer and teach as he did Christ's whole nature was swimming in the ocean of Divinity as this visible universe of ours swims in the might and majesty of God' (*The Oriental Christ* page 37)

When Christ asks his disciples, at the parting to eat his flesh and drink his blood it is to illustrate the idea

that he should not only be worshipped objectively but subjectively. He leaves the rich legacy, that "faith in Christ means life in Christ." Alas, how little is the spirit of Christ observed to-day!

"When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the Cross of Christ, my God
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His Head, His Haods, His Feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down,
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all

To Christ Who won for sinners grace
By bitter grief and anguish sore
Be praise from all the ransomed race,
For ever and for evermore!"

The Cross in Christianity is symbolical of sacrifice. The life of Christ illustrates how man can become perfect only through sacrifice. In fact the whole teaching of Christianity is based on the idea of sacrifice. This fact of sacrifice is the pivotal point in all religions of the world. The manifestation of God is a sacrifice. When the Unknown limits Himself by creating the universe, when He descends into matter and becomes the Logos, it is God's

Self-limitation and therefore a great sacrifice. Sacrifice is the law of creation, manifestation, life, love. It is at the very root of the idea of evolution. The minerals sacrifice to evolve the vegetable kingdom. The vegetables sacrifice to bring out the animal kingdom. The animals sacrifice to create human kingdom. And men sacrifice to become gods. The higher the sacrifice, the greater the approach to God. It means atonement—at-one-ment with humanity and God. Christ's teaching, when viewed from the esoteric point of view, is nothing but **ONENESS WITH GOD** through sacrifice, through love, through life.

God is immanent and this great teaching of His immanence is emphasised in all religions of the world, particularly in Hinduism. "The teaching of *Farvashis* or *Farohars* in Zoroastrianism also points to *Ahura Mazda's* immanence in man and nature. In Christianity we get an idea of God's immanence in the universe, from the teaching of the law of Sacrifice, working throughout all the kingdoms, mineral, vegetable and animal." In fact, "the expensive energy of the Logos is ceaselessly working." Mrs Annie Besant describes in the course of a most uplifting passage in her immortal book, *Esoteric Christianity*, this pervading essence of the Logos in the universe and the object of all life, which is **ONENESS WITH GOD**. She says

'Through that perpetual sacrifice of the Logos all lives exist, it is the life by which the universe is ever becoming. This life is One, but it embodies itself in myriad forms, ever drawing them together and gently overcoming their resistance. Thus it is an at-one-ment, a unifying force, by which the separated lives are gradually made conscious of their unity, labouring to develop in each a self-consciousness,

which shall at last know itself to be one with all others and in its root One and divine "

God is joy Sacrifice therefore is, really speaking, joy, not pain When we pour out our heart in sacrifice, when we pour out all our love for the erring brother or sister to redeem him or her, we are hastening the work of evolution which is the primal object of God's creation and we are thus silently perfecting ourselves to become fit to enter into the Kingdom of God

There is joy in giving, not taking "It is more blessed to give than to take," says the *Bible* There is life when we live for others, not for ourselves To give, to surrender, to lose, may appear painful so long as we objectify life in terms of matter But if we transcend matter, as Christ teaches his apostles and enter into the Spirit which alone is real and permanent, every sacrifice of the body becomes a joy, not pain "He that will save his own life, shall lose it, but he who follows the inner voice and throws away his life shall enter into life eternal

The object of every religion is the unfoldment of the spiritual nature of man There is a craving in man for God, In some it is in an intense form In others it is suppressed The object of every religion is to quicken human evolution There are divergent elements in the framework of humanity The purpose of religion is best served when its teachings are such as to appeal to all classes of people It is therefore that in Christianity as in other religions, we find both exoteric and esoteric teachings The commandments are meant for the ordinary people to keep them away from evil For those who are highly developed both intellectually and spiritually, Christ's teachings which were mostly by word of mouth,

contain occult knowledge of a most entrancing nature. Such knowledge gives supernormal powers to man and the danger of its abuse being known only the selected ones were given the opportunity to be initiated into this knowledge.

Christianity does not offer only a simple faith. The mystical side of its teaching forms its most important and permanent feature. If this is discarded or overlooked, Christianity must fail to appeal to the intellect of man.

There are various references to the secret teachings of Christ. There are significant terms used by Christ. These are 'The Kingdom', 'The Kingdom of God', 'The Kingdom of Heaven', 'The Narrow Path', 'The Strait Gate', 'The Perfect', 'The Saved', 'Life Eternal', 'The Second Birth', 'A Little One', 'A Little Child'. Christ says, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables." His teachings are directed all the time to two classes of people. He speaks in parables to those who form the largest body, the worldly-minded. A simple faith satisfies them. But to the few, who can understand his teachings and long for God, day and night, out of the fulness of their hearts and are prepared to make all sacrifices he shows the narrow path, which the perfected souls alone can tread.

The following passage refers to the narrow gateway of Initiation.

'Then said one unto him Lord, are these few that he saved? And he said unto them 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate for many, I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able.' 'Enter in at the strait

princes of this world know. The things of that wisdom are beyond man's thinking, but God had revealed them unto us by His Spirit—the deep things of God, which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Two of the great pillars of Christianity, Origen and St. Clemens, in the second and third centuries, wrote upon the hidden side of Christ's teaching and they proved that "The Mysteries were a recognised institution" in the time of Christ. They observe that the scriptures were written by the Spirit of God and they have more meaning than one. Origen in his book, *De Principes*, gives his views on the interpretation of the Christian scripture. The body of the scripture is the historical and common sense. The soul is that which has to be discovered by intellect and the spirit can be understood only by those who have "the mind of Christ."

The intellectuals, who now keep away from the Church congregations, will be attracted to the Church pews if they were convinced of the existence of the occult knowledge. Occultism should no longer be a sealed book.

Christ is hailed as Man's Saviour. The underlying idea is that each man has to become Christ-like. Only by his own actions, through his own perfection, can one become his own saviour and not, as falsely interpreted by many, that man's sins can be washed off by repentance and Christ's grace alone can save him. The sole idea of the ceremony of "Initiation" is to lead man into the region of truth and light, to lead him unto ONENESS WITH GOD.

Religion to many, is a mere question of faith, not knowledge. But the esoteric teaching not only in Christianity but in every religion reveals to us the mystery

of God. Religion is not a matter of mere belief, faith or hope. It is experience, knowledge. "Man must know the reality of the Divine Existence and then know—not only vaguely believe and hope—that his own innermost Self is One with God and that the aim of life is to realize that unity." (Mrs. Annie Besant, in *Esoteric Christianity*, page 32).

The atonement of Christ means at-one-ment with God, *i.e.*, union with God. God is the only Reality. He is all in all. He is Spirit, not matter. He is Life. Sin, disease, evil and matter are foreign to God. They are unreal. They are contrary to God's nature. Christ, by his most exemplary life of perfection, broke all the laws of matter. He conquered temptations. The miracles of cure, that he performed on lepers and others suffering from incurable diseases, showed the high stage of perfection his spirit had attained. It is only spirit that can discern the Divinity of God. "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." (*John 14. 12.*)

Pictures of Christ are seen in many painted windows of churches or cathedrals, as "the Good Shepherd with the lost lamb on His shoulder." But this "Good Shepherd" was not allowed to preach his religion of love and purity for more than three years. He "went about doing good", but the ignorant and wicked stoned him and put him to an ignoble death, for his purity was an insult to their impurity; his spirituality, a reproach to their sinfulness; his greatness, an intolerable contrast to their littleness.

Christianity, one of the youngest religions of the world, has nothing new to teach. "Blessed are the pure

in heart, for they shall see God" is the teaching of purity, which is common to all religions. Divinity can be sensed only by purity. "God is all-in-all" and the unity of man with God is as much the teaching of the Vedic seers as of Christ. The last prayer of Christ before he was crucified was that "They all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us—I in them and Thou in me that they may be perfect in One." Thus **ONENESS WITH GOD** is the sum and total also of the teaching of Christ, as it is of every great religion.

Islam

Muhammad was only a child when he lost both his father and mother. He was brought up by his uncle and grandfather, an old man of 100 years, who discerned in the child the signs of future greatness. Very little is known of Muhammad's early career. The boy's principal education was from the sand dunes over which he roved by day and the stars at which he gazed at night. His own thoughts and ruminations were his best companions and teachers. He was not sent to any school or academy. He came in contact with *Hanifs*, a tribe in Arabia who believed in one God and whose mode of living and thinking was in great contrast to the life commonly led by other tribesmen with whom wine and women, feuds and wars, chase and gambling, were the chief objects of pursuit. Tribal or family honour formed the only saving grace in the character of a *Bedouin*. The contact with the God-fearing, ascetic-minded *Hanifs* in such a wild country as Arabia must have made a deep impression upon Muhammad.

We are told that he commenced life as a tradesman. During his trade journeys he came in contact with Christian monks also. His visits to the fairs of Syria were

significant. The influence of the *Hanifs*, combined with the teachings which he got from the Jews and Christian missionaries, prepared him for a religious career. He began to ruminate and meditate. He sought seclusion. The Mount Hara, near Mecca, became his favourite resort for silent meditation.

At the age of 25 he married a widow, much older than himself. The marriage proved happy. He confided to his wife Cadijah all his secret aspirations. Was he ambitious? Was he satisfied with the role of life he was playing? He was a tradesman, no doubt. His business was to travel from place to place and secure orders. But his heart and soul were engrossed in the deeper things of life. What perturbed his young mind were the questions of the universe, whence came man and what was his destiny. He would sit for hours together in the shade of the Frankincense trees and try to find out a solution to life's riddle. Engrossed in his own thoughts, lost in the silence of the wilderness, one day the revelation came to him like a great flash of lightning. The angel Gabriel, we are told, appeared before him. He was dazzled by a luminous light. The angel held out a silken scroll before him and compelled him to read, though he did not know how to read. "Read in the name of the Lord, who created man from a drop. Read for thy Lord is the Most High who had taught by the pen, had taught to man what he knew not. Nay, truly, man walketh in delusion, when he deems he suffices for himself; *to thy Lord they must all return.*"

The final sentence in Gabriel's message clearly says that not only God has created man, but that his final destiny is to return to God. ONENESS WITH GOD is not only the teaching of Zoroaster and Buddha, Shri Krishna and Christ. Muhammad, the last of the prophets,

gets the same revelation, the same exalted teaching.
ONENESS WITH GOD.

Muhammad spoke of this revelation to his wife Cadijah, who believed every word of his utterance and had great faith in him. He lived in a state of great bewilderment and anguish for two or three years, when again came the revelation, finally removing all doubts and misgivings. Muhammad now felt secure in the thought that he was destined by God to become His messenger. *La ilah illa 'llah* "There is no God but the one God". *Muhammad Rasul Illah* "Muhammad is His prophet".

The first one to become his disciple was his wife, Cadijah. The word *Koran* means 'Things to be read'. It is a book of revelation and, according to the followers of Islam, it is considered to be the most wondrous document, so wondrous that even by a million readings, its profundity would not be sufficiently gauged by the wisest. It describes God's wonders, His greatness, the great Law, which man has to follow, the beauty of Heaven which is promised to the faithful and the fire of Hell which is the inescapable lot of the faithless who disregard the laws of *Allah*.

Islam means submission to the sovereign will of God. It is not for us to doubt God's wisdom or question His justice. Whatever He wills, it is best for us. His Law is just "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him", this is the spirit and teaching of Islam. This complete self-annihilation is the chief feature of the Islamic faith.

Muhammad spoke of his new teaching but he gained not more than thirteen followers in the course of three long years. His progress was extremely slow. But he was not daunted. Had he not seen the light? Had not the fire within him been awakened? Muhammad was a

true and sincere man. He invited and gathered round his simple home, about forty people who were headsmen of their tribes. He put his plans before them. He spoke to them of the great message, the great mission which he was charged to perform. But they all laughed at him. None in the assembly was moved except Ali, a lad of sixteen, who volunteered to join Muhammad in his mission. The meeting dispersed amidst ridicule and scorn. But Muhammad stood firm as a rock. Nothing dismayed him. Had not the voice spoken to him to worship only one God, the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer, the Cause of all Causes, the Origin of all Origins? "Lo, *Allah*: Unto Him belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He quickeneth and He giveth death. And ye have, instead of *Allah*, no protecting friend nor helper." (*Surah LX, Verse 116*)

Muhammad set out on his mission accompanied by Ali. But he met with a severe opposition from those who believed in tribal gods and worshipped idols. They refused to listen to him. They hurled stones and brickbats at him. Even oaths were taken to murder him. He was driven out from every street and corner. He had to hide himself to save his life. Eventually, he escaped in disguise, fleeing from Mecca to Medina. The *Hegira* is the name given to the era, which dates from the day Muhammad flew from Mecca to Medina. The first year of this *Hegira* corresponds to 622 A. D. It was the fifty-third of Muhammad's life.

Whether Muhammad eventually succeeded in spreading his religion by the sword or the word of mouth is not the point. There is to-day a very large number of people who follow Islam, which is the State religion in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, some parts of Africa and Afghanistan. Out of a population of about 40 crores

fire the courage of that great soul who founded in the desert sands of Arabia, a religion, which afterwards penetrated into various other parts of the world and which has become a world religion.

We have already explained the main teaching of Islam viz, resignation to the sovereign will of Allah. The word 'Islam,' which is the name given to Muhammad's religion and which is mentioned in the *Koran* is, derived from the Arabic *Slam* which means, to make peace to be saved to give oneself up to the will of God, to be resigned to God. The true Muhammadan is a believer in the doctrine of *Kismet*. He never grumbles when there is pain or suffering. He considers them, as ordained by God. The Hindu takes it laconically and philosophically as the result of his *Karma* in the past life. The Moslem thinks it is ordained by God and he must willfully, patiently and heroically bear it, for all that is ordained by God is for his own good, for his own salvation.

Islam signifies not only resignation to God it also means peace on earth. The idea of peace with God and man is predominant in the Moslem scripture. Allah is variously named. But the most significant name of God is the 'Author of Peace,' the 'Abode of Peace.' Peace with everyone on earth is preached by Muhammad for the religion that he established is not one that is new to mankind. Even according to Muhammad's own admission Islam is the religion, which the prophets that preceded Muhammad had taught to mankind. The following translation from the *Koran*, (Preface page v), says, 'Every child is born with a disposition towards the natural religion (Islam). It is the parents who make it a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.' By 'Magian' is meant Zoroastrian. Islam is therefore nothing but a repetition

of the religious teachings of the prophets who had preceded Muhammad and as such we should think there is no necessity for proselytizing activities in Muhammadaism or any religion. The cardinal teachings in Islam are —

- 1 The Unity of God
- 2 Prayers (*Salat*)
- 3 Alms-giving (*Zakat*)
- 4 Fast Ramadan (*Saom*)
- 5 Performance of pilgrimage of Mecca (*Haj*)

The belief in the unity of God is the most fundamental teaching. The *Koran* says, "All is from Allah", "Surely we are from Allah and to Him we shall surely return". The purpose and object of life are therefore very clearly and definitely mentioned in the *Koran*. Man is an emanation from God and the object of life is to return to God. **ONENESS WITH GOD** is the essential teaching of the *Koran*.

How to achieve this **ONENESS WITH GOD** is shown by the code of ethics in the *Koran*. "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good to others and the giving to kindred and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion. He admonishes ye and ye may be mindful". "Surely Allah is with those who guard against evil and those who do good to others". Prayers, Alms-giving, Fasting and Pilgrimage to Mecca are given prominence in Islam, as they are the means of purifying man and elevating his moral and spiritual life.

A true Moslem worships God in all humility of soul. He prays for spiritual strength to light evil and the temptations of life. "Oh Allah, guide me among those whom Thou hast guided right, and preserve me among

those whom Thou hast preserved and befriend me among those whom Thou hast befriended and bless me in what Thou dost grant me and protect me from the evil of what Thou hast judged for surely Thou judgest and none can judge against THEE surely he whom thou befriendest is not disgraced Blessed are Thou, our Lord and Exalted"

Alms giving is enjoined upon every true believer He is asked to give away at least ten percent of his daily income in charity for the uplift of the poor Prayers and alms-giving are mentioned always together in the *Koran*. The purpose of both is to elevate the spirit "And keep up prayer and pay the poor rate and how down with those who how down" (*Koran*, Ch II, 43) 'And keep up prayer and pay the poor rate and whatever good you send before for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah surely Allah sees what you do" (*Koran*, Ch II 110)

The principal idea of alms-giving is to relieve the pain and suffering of the recipient and not to put him into any moral obligation. Neither any charity should be made with a view to gain name or popularity Indiscriminate charity is also forbidden He who gives from his unlawful possessions is not doing any charity One who gives secretly, with feelings of love and affection to alleviate human suffering out of his lawful possessions or honest earnings made by the sweat of his brow, is doing real charity.

"Oh ye who believe spend (give in alms) of the good things, which you have earned, and of that which we bring forth from the earth for you and seek not the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity) when ye would not take it for yourselves save with disdain and know Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise" (*Surah* II, Verse 267)

"Verily those who do deeds of real goodness shall drink of a cup tempered with *Kafur* (camphor) (*Surah LXXVI Verse 5*)

There are no austerities enjoined upon the followers of Islam though we know that Muhammad practised them in his own life. He used to mend his own shoes, and patch his own cloak. He lived on a most frugal diet. He was not ashamed to go to the market place every day to make purchases for himself, a friend or neighbour. His humility and meekness won him respect and admiration. Though Muhammad does not teach asceticism he practised austerities to a great extent. For months there would be no fire burning in his home kitchen. Mere barley bread and water sufficed him. He would sweep the floor with his own hand and sleep on the bare ground.

Islam teaches moderation in everything but fasting, especially during the month of Ramadan during day time, is strictly enjoined upon the followers. They are also asked to abstain from drinking wine. 'O ye, who believe! strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed' (*Surah V, Verse 90*)

Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) at least once in a man's life-time is prescribed by Muhammad. This journey is required to be undertaken only if a man has means to travel and he does not leave his dependants in a precarious condition. The prince and the peasant, the wealthy trader and the humble shepherd when they go on a pilgrimage are looked upon with equal eyes as brothers. All are dressed in the simplest garments. All undertake the journey with a view to bear austerities of life for self purification and for the love of God.

Muhammad according to western scholars, was more a legislator, a warrior, a social reformer than a prophet. The British Encyclopaedia Britannica considers the *Koran* as Muhammad's weakest performance. Welding the multitudinous warring elements, worshipping different tribal gods and forms, into a homogenous mass, was an achievement of no mean order. To do this required the statesman's firm hand, the warrior's strong arm, the legislator's keen eye and the superb brain of a practical organiser. Muhammad was a legislator, a warrior, a statesman, a craftsman, all combined. His genius shone at every stage of his life. But it must be stated, that had not Muhammad got the revelation, which stirred the uncultured, untutored mind to its very depths, he would have achieved very little or nothing. It was the revelation which inspired Muhammad to deeds of dogged heroism.

Blood attachment was the only tie recognised by the rough Bedouins of the desert. Woman was held as a chattel. Men married as many wives as they wished. There was no respect for law or morality. To take blood and revenge were the common practices of the tribesmen. To subdue them, to reduce their thirst and passion for wild things, required supernormal powers and energy. And Muhammad succeeded in converting the undisciplined savage masses into a law-abiding people. He filled their minds with visions. He raised the status of womanhood. He allowed each man to marry upto four wives, provided they could be respectfully treated, loved and maintained by their husbands. This type of morality may appear shocking to us. But in Muhammad's time when promiscuity was the order of the day, enforcement of even this much of restraint was an achievement. The descriptions of heaven and hell, revealed in the *Koran*, border on sensuality. But it is a mistaken notion to consider

them in such a light. They are mere symbolical representations in tune with the existing human psychological factors.

The chief merit of Islam lies in its realism. It offers a course, which every one can traverse without much difficulty. It teaches simple truths and enforces simple virtues. There is no occult side in Islam. The higher idealism of transcending the limitations of the senses, which the few alone can practise, is conspicuous by its absence in Islamic teachings.

Islam is allied to Socialism. When it teaches that no man shall earn interest by lending money, it is laying the foundation of the truth, that labour alone is wealth and accumulation of riches is a sin. Each must live by the sweat of his brow and the worker must be paid the wages before his perspiration dries up. This is a most salutary doctrine preached by Muhammad and this teaching alone, if nothing else, entitles Islam to be reckoned as a great contributory factor to the progress of the world.

We reiterate that the central teaching in Islam, as in all other world religions, is the Unity of God. "All is from Allah." "Surely we are from Allah and to Him we shall surely return." This idea of man's returning to God and not entering into any heaven or hell, which are only, symbolical expressions to define the nature of our mental state when we are on the journey to God, is the basic truth. We know the story of Rabia Basri, who, in her innate love for the Creator, rushed out one day from the room with a flaming rod in her hand. She was stopped by her disciple Bayazed Bustami and was asked to explain the cause of her anger. She said that she would like to burn down heaven and hell. People must love God for the sake of God and not out of fear of hell or

love of heaven. The very word *Insan* means love in perfection and man's goal in life is ONENESS WITH GOD Who is All Love, Perfect Love.

CHAPTER IV

YOGA

Life is full of contradictions. If we say that this world has no existence, it would appear to be quite incorrect. Its existence is a manifest fact, if our eyes and ears that perceive and hear are to be recognised as our guides. But the question is whether the eyes and ears and the other senses are the real guides. The world that we see and in which we move and act, appears to us to exist, because of the mind. But this mind is not everything. In fact, it is the adamant wall that comes between us and the Reality. It is the veil that shuts out the light.

We live in a world of *maya*. What is *maya*? It is variously described. It is delusion. It is illusion. We feel that we are happy in the possession of our mud-pies. We feel that the world we see is a reality. But, truly speaking, it is not so. If all that is tangible is real, there would be no death, no end of life, no veil to be lifted. We move in a circle. We take our pleasures and pains as a matter of routine. We allow ourselves to be drowned by the enjoyments of the senses. Desires increase as they are fed more and more. Life becomes a sea of sorrow. The pleasures of the senses act like a wall, a thick pall of gloom, that divides us from the Reality.

The question is, how to remove or break open the wall that acts as a bar between us and the Reality. Man's first impulse is to live for himself. But selfishness is the parent of much misery and sin. It is only when the soul's hunger for spiritual light is satisfied, the doors of the Reality open and we get the true knowledge that this world of ours is but a shadow of the Reality. It is impermanent. It has no absolute existence.

Rama got this craving for spiritual light at a very early age. He was hardly fifteen when his father, Dasaratha, the ancient King of Ayodhya sent him on a pilgrimage to the holy places of worship. He had an opportunity to talk and associate with the *sanyasins* and coming in contact with the world at large, this young boy began to brood upon the problems of life. His face "was sicklied over with the pale cast of thought." When he was asked to explain the cause of his melancholy he said, "I can bear to be sawed alive. But the pain accruing from world desires and ambitions and from the ways of the world is utterly unbearable."

We know Buddha also felt in the same way. He left the royal home, his young wife and child, whom he loved more than himself to seek the solution for human suffering.

We know the story of Nachiketas in the *Katha Upanishad*. He went to Yama, the Lord of Death. Yama offered him all the good things of the world that would satiate any man,—long life, beautiful damsels, an empire, chariots and horses, dances and songs, all that could satisfy the sensuous mind. But Nachiketas said, "These are mere things of a day, O Death, they bear away the energy of all the sense organs. Even the longest life is very short. These horses and chariots, dances and songs

may remain with thee. Men cannot be satisfied by wealth. Can we retain wealth when we behold thee? We shall live only so long as thou desirest." What reply Yama gave to this enquiring spirit of the young lad, we shall relate when we explain in the following pages what *yoga* is and what it purports to be.

Not only it is the teaching of the ancient Vedantic philosophy and of Buddhism, that life is *maya*, but coming to Western scholars, we find the great German philosopher, Schopenhauer, stressing the same point. He says, "Every thing in life shows that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated and recognised as an illusion. Life presents itself as a continuous deception in small things as in great. The enchantment of distance shows us paradises which vanish like optical illusions, when we have allowed ourselves to be mocked by them. Life with its hourly, daily, weekly, yearly, little, great and greater misfortunes, with its deluded hopes and its accidents destroying all our calculations, bears so distinctly the impression of something with which we must become disgusted that it is hard to conceive how one has been able to mistake this and allow oneself to be persuaded that life is there in order to be thankfully enjoyed and that man exists in order to be happy. Rather that continual illusion and disillusion and also the nature of life throughout presents itself to us as intended and calculated to awaken the conviction that nothing at all is worth our striving, our efforts and struggles: that all good things are vanity, the world is in its ends bankrupt; and life a business which does not cover expenses."

We know the story of Mahabali related in *Yoga-Vasistha*. It reads like the story of Alexander the Great. He was a great warrior king, who had brought the whole

world under subjugation. Arrogant and proud he enquired of his minister whether there was any country in the world which he had not conquered. And he was told that, though he had conquered a large kingdom on earth, he had failed to conquer one territory, which was greater than his very kingdom and without its subjugation, he could not be called a great king. The king was angry. He demanded to know what that territory was. The minister said, "It is a territory difficult to conquer, for the minister who holds the keys is a wily man, though the sovereign himself is a mild ruler." It then dawned upon Mahabali that the kingdom which he had not conquered was the kingdom of God, that was within him and from that date, leaving off pride and arrogance, he turned his gaze inwards, devoting his life to prayers and austerities.

True happiness lies within. Self or the *Atman* lies hidden within the various sheaths of the body that cover it. These sheaths have to be penetrated and removed, one by one, as we peel off the skin of an onion till we reach the core, which is the dwelling of the *Atman*. How to do it is explained by the Science of *Yoga*.

What is *yoga*? It is the path or method by which the soul can attain its union with God. The word *yoga* means union. It is derived from the Sanskrit root, *Yuj*, which means to join.

The teachers of religion gave their teachings to the world as a result of their own personal experiences. The Buddha gave his teaching of *nirvana* to the world, after he had realized it in a state of *samadhi*. Zoroaster, Christ and the *Rishis* of India were possessed of supernatural powers. They saw God. They saw their souls. They saw the future. They saw Eternity. The religions founded by them are followed by us, for we have faith in them. But is faith enough? The Science of *Yoga* gives

us a practical demonstration of how God, the soul, the future and Eternity can be seen and realized. Each soul is potentially divine. The goal of man's life is to uncover the sheaths that hide the divinity within him, by controlling nature, both externally and internally. Nature is like a book, the secrets of which have to be mastered and then left off.

The liberation of the soul is the whole of religion. Yoga seeks the same goal of liberation. It is yours. It is mine. This great spiritual freedom, if you or I practise any or all of the four methods of yoga. They are *Karma Yoga*—work without attachment—, *Bhakti Yoga*—worship of God through devotion and sincerity—, *Raja Yoga*—psychic control—, and *Gnan Yoga*—philosophy or wisdom of transcending nature.

If we understand that 'Self is all and nothing else exists,' we understand the whole secret of yoga. If man renounces the pleasures of the senses and the unrealities of life, he identifies himself with the Self. As Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'I regard the saga as Myself' (*Discourse VII-18*). Kabir says in one of his songs, 'When my Beloved is within me, why should my heart be affected with sorrow?'

When a man works in the laboratory, he must know the laws of chemistry, but it is not necessary at all to his calling that he should know or practise the laws of ethics or morality. The scientist may be a good man or a bad man. The goodness or badness of his character has nothing to do with the scheme of his life. But in the practice of yoga, character is the most fundamental point. The *Bhagavad-Gita* describes both the divine and demonic traits of character as under:

"The Blessed Lord said. Fearlessness, cleanness of life, steadfastness in the yoga of wisdom, alms-giving,

self-restraint and sacrifice and study of the scriptures, austerity and straightforwardness harmlessness truth, absence of wrath renunciation, peacefulness absence of crookedness, compassion to living beings uncovetousness mildness modesty absence of fickleness vigour forgiveness fortitude purity absence of envy and pride—these are his who is born with the divine properties O Bharata' (XVI—1,2,3)

'Hypocrisy arrogance and conceit wrath and also harshness and unwisdom are his who is born O Partha, with demoniacal properties (XVI—4)

'The divine properties are deemed to be for liberation the demoniacal for bondage Grieve not thou art born with divine properties O Pandava (XVI—5)

Every religion lays great stress upon the development of character So it is in the practice of *yoga*

The *Gita* is considered to be the gospel of *yoga* Some scholars look upon it as a gospel of *Karma Yoga* some as a gospel of *Bhakti Yoga* and some as a gospel of *Gnan Yoga* If by *yoga* we mean spiritual life union or fellowship with God the *Gita* is not necessarily the gospel of any particular type of *yoga* as Bal Gangadhar Tilak Ramanuja and Shankara try to make out Spiritual life is a matter of natural growth and development There can be therefore no hard and fast rules characterising the various stage of *yoga* Nevertheless *Karma Yoga* may be considered as the first step or stage in the spiritual ladder of perfection *Bhakti Yoga* as the second step and *Gnan Yoga* as the final step Many consider *Raja Yoga* as the king of *yogas* as it is a harmonious blend of all the three *yogas Karma Bhakti* and *Gnan*

It is only with the awakening of the soul the desire to study *yoga* is felt The first thought of man is to do

gives false values, which engrosses our passions and enchants us to a life of desires. Separateness means unhappiness. It is the fruit of ignorance. Men and nations are unhappy because they seek false channels of happiness and do not know the Reality.

Yoga is a science. It has a message to give. It is a system, which teaches that life is not separateness. *We are all one in God.* The sun and the stars, the moon and the sea in which it is reflected, the radiant flowers that waft their pleasant odours in sweet scented air, the hills and planes, the sheep that graze on the green meadow and the birds that chirp in the shady trees, men, women and children, the aged and the lame, the bright and the wicked, the young and the old, the poet and the dolt—they are all emanations from one great source—God. If this lesson be burnt into our souls, if this aloofness, the disease of selfishness, were broken, what a wonderful world would this be. A yogi is not a miracle monger, as is commonly understood in the West. He is not a juggler, a faddist, a dreamer, a fraud, a lazy imbecile.

Yoga, we reiterate, is a science. It is a science of happiness. It is a science of union with God. It is the highest wisdom. It is illumination. Western knowledge seeks to enlarge the surfaces. The aim of Western scholars is extension. Yogic science is concerned with the plumbing of the depths of life. Not on the plane of extension but on the plane of "depth" is the yogic science built. It turns man's attention inwards, not outwards. We shall speak later on of how this inward knowledge can be attained of Self, which is the only Reality.

Karma Yoga

The word "Karma" is derived from the Sanskrit *Kri*, to do. No man can live without work. We all have to work to earn our living. We work for Bread. We work to gain wealth or riches. We work to carve a niche in the temple of fame. We work to gain power or position. But a true *Karmayogi* does not work with such an ulterior motive as of gaining name or fame, title or honour, wealth or power. He is not ambitious for worldly gains. His only aspiration is to work for the sake of work, to do his duty for the sake of duty, to be virtuous for the sake of virtue. Does not God work incessantly for the good of the whole creation which He loves?

The true *Karmayogi* renounces the fruits of his labour. He expects no return, no reward, no fruit, no consideration. He works without attachment. He is kind, just, merciful and considerate to others. But he never claims justice, kindness, mercy or consideration from any one for himself. His heart is fully engrossed in work, but he never gives a thought to gain anything from any one, not even a pleasant word or a smile. He is content to lead the life of complete self-effacement. Work to him is worship. He treats the whole human race equally. His heart is full of the milk of human kindness. He looks upon all as his brothers and sisters, who have to be helped in their distress and difficulty; who are to be lifted from darkness into light.

In China there is a beautiful custom. People are honoured for their good deeds only after their death. Among Muhammadans the devout Moslem has the ambition that when he dies a big tomb may be raised over his grave. But the true *Karmayogi* does not seek any return even after death. He does not work to gain heaven. He

works strenuously, zealously, earnestly, with all his heart and soul, because he must help others and spread happiness in this world "Thine, not mine," is the slogan of this yogi. It is when he works in this spirit of self abnegation, without egoism, without attachment, without expectation of a reward in this or the other world, that he surpasses the ascetic, who retires into the forest, to seek his own salvation. The *Karmayogi* works in the crowded city, molested by sinners at every nook and corner. He works in the factory and the field, where every one's thought is engrossed in himself. He works in an atmosphere that is surcharged with selfishness, hypocrisy, sin and sloth, greed and slavery. But he keeps cool. He hates sin but he loves the sinner. He is not affected by the blasts of calumny or slander. He works patiently, unselfishly, ungrudgingly, his mind fixed on one object, that he must work for others and not for his own gain. He keeps before him the ideal of Christ and Buddha, Zoroaster and Lord Krishna, who worked like Trojans, in good and bad weather, unaffected by the smiles of an applauding crowd or the sneers of the wicked.

He disciplines his life in such a way as to become completely self abnegated. Swami Vivekananda in this connection says, "It is the most difficult thing in the world to work and not care for the result to help a man and never think that he ought to be grateful to do some good work and at the same time never look to see whether it brings you name or fame or nothing at all. Even the most arrant coward becomes brave when the world praises him. A fool can do heroic deeds when the approbation of society is upon him but for a man to constantly do good without caring for the approbation of his fellow-men is indeed the highest sacrifice a man can perform."

One of the chief virtues that is necessary not only in the practice of *Karma Yoga*, but in all other kinds of yoga, is perfect quietude of the mind "To be steady-fixed in the spirit, *dhirā sthira*, this quietude of the mind this separation of the inner *Purusha* from the outer *Prakriti* is very helpful, almost indispensable "

(Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*)

To develop this trait of mental equipoise, in the midst of fiery trials of the day's crowded life, is more difficult than in any other circumstances and the *Karmayogi* who does this scores a great victory indeed

To the question put, who is the greater man, the *Karmayogi* or the *Sanyassi* who retires into a forest, Swami Vivekananda gives the following reply "It is useless to say that the man who lives out of the world is a greater man than he who lives in the world, it is much more difficult to live in the world and worship God than to give it up and live a free and easy life "

We know what a fine *Karmayogi* Swami Vivekananda himself was. He was a monk. He loved solitude. He was a man of austerities. He was shy and unassuming. To him the snowcapped regions of the Himalayas and the forests of India had a greater fascination than the hum of the busy cities. He was appointed as a delegate to speak on behalf of India at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in the year 1893, and this monk immediately embarked upon the journey without even proper credentials and ostensible means for undertaking such a great journey. It was distasteful to him—a wandering monk, accustomed to simplicity of life,—to go to America, the 'dollar country,' the seat of rampant materialism. But when the question was of performing one's own duty, however arduous and unpleasant, Swami Vivekananda



LORD KRISHNA

was not the one to shirk it. He had the highest conception of duty. A man used to solitude feels uneasy in a crowded place. A man accustomed to a round of busy activities is at a loss if he is thrust in the solitude of the mountains. But a true yogi is he who feels intensely active even in the midst of solitude and *vice versa*, who is completely at ease in the midst of giddy activities. Swami Vivekananda was therefore a true *Karmayogi*, silent in the midst of storm, active in the midst of silence, his mind being thoroughly restrained for all occasions and for all purposes.

"To work we have the right, but not to the fruits thereof," such is the teaching of *Karma Yoga*. When a man works silently, patiently, with a strong will and purpose, he succeeds in governing others. For when self is obliterated, God makes the selfless worker His instrument in carrying out the process of evolution. The self-effaced *Karmayogi* becomes **ONE WITH GOD**, for God works through him and gives him the powers, the resources and all the energy needed to achieve success. Swami Vivekananda went to America, an unknown man. When he returned he was a different man, honoured by the world as a great orator and thinker.

The *Bhagavad Gita* lays very great importance on the conception of Duty. Lord Krishna sees Arjuna unwilling to fight for his kind. A brave warrior that Arjuna is, he shrinks at the thought of arraying himself in the battlefield, against friends and relations, some of whom are his *gurus* — Bhishma and Drona, whom he holds in great reverence and esteem. "Better in this world to eat even the beggar's crust than to slay these most noble *gurus*. Slaying these *gurus*, our well-wishers, I should taste of blood-besprinkled feasts," pleads Arjuna to Shri Krishna.

But Shri Krishna rebukes him and calls him a coward and a hypocrite.

Shri Krishna shows to Arjuna that he cannot take shelter under the plea of non resistance as the highest ideal. For God alone is eternal and men's bodies are perishable, whether they are slain in battle or not. To fail in carrying out a righteous war is to fail in one's own duty and honour. It is incurring sin. He advises Arjuna to "stand up."

The conception of duty varies with different people. It is very difficult to give an objective definition of duty, as people's notions of it differ. The Hindus worship the cow. The Moslems slaughter it. Murder is the worst of offences. But in war millions are slaughtered and no sin is committed. But we can define the word "duty" subjectively. Any action as Swami Vivekananda says that makes us go Godward is duty. When a man feels exaltation of spirit it means he has done his duty. When he feels depressed it means he has failed in duty. Duty ennobles. Not to injure any one is a duty enjoined on all. Words carry poison when they breathe hatred. They are sweet as honey when they come from a loving heart. One of the essential practices in *Karma Yoga* is to speak gently lovingly, kindly, courteously, consolingly. Words should soothe and console and not embitter or enrage.

No misery can ever come from work done without attachment. If you help a man do not wait for his gratitude. You should rather be grateful to God that He gave you an opportunity to serve him. For, every little bit, that you do in helping others in distress, strengthens your soul and enriches your mind and heart.

We are debtors to the world and by helping and working for others we are directly or indirectly helping

ourselves. God rules the universe. And the presumption that we have done something should be dismissed. For it is He who is incessantly at work, day and night, watching us, guiding us, protecting us. God is the centre of all our activities. It is through Him that the light comes and it is to Him the *Karmayogi* submits. As Sri Aurobindo says, "In the practice of *yoga* what you aim at can only come by the opening of the being to the Mother's force and the persistent rejection of all egoism and demand and desire—all motives except the aspiration for the Divine Truth. If this is rightly done the Divine Power and Light will begin to work and bring in the peace and equanimity, the inner strength, the purified devotion and the increasing consciousness and self knowledge which are the necessary foundation for the *siddhi* of the *yoga*."

(*Bases of Yoga*, pages 75 & 76)

Even the spirits of the Other World, good or evil, according to the contacts they form with good and evil-minded men on earth play their part. One good thought of a good man gets momentum as it comes into contact with the vibrations of the higher spirits. A bad thought of an evil minded man is led and stirred up by the evil-designing spirits of the Other World. This is how good or evil on earth is intensified by the partnership of good or evil spirits both discarnate and incarnate.

There are various classes of persons in the world. There is an extremely small class who may be considered as God men. Their notion of life is—and they are the best specimens of *Karmayogis*—to do good all the time, even at the sacrifice of their lives. The second group is composed of those who do good so long as they are not injured. The third class consists of those who injure others to do good to themselves. And the fourth group is

composed of the evil designers, who have no scruples of any kind and injure others for the sake of injuring them. They take a malicious delight in their pursuit of evil.

Karma Yoga teaches unselfishness. To the *Karmayogi* unselfishness is his God. Whether he lives in a palace or in a hut, surrounded by riches or poverty, his first impulse is absolute forgetfulness of self. This complete forgetfulness of self is the common trait in all kinds of *yoga*. Self is a delusion. The *Bhakta* knows it when he surrenders himself completely to God. The *Rajayogi* has a practical experience of it when he goes into *samadhi*. The *Gnanyogi* knows it through his intrinsic knowledge. The *Karmayogi* knows that, though he is in the world, the world does not exist for his enjoyment. He has to work to modify it, to purify it, to perfect it, according to his best lights, without any kind of attachment. When he works with this thought of complete self-annihilation nothing affects him. He is neither elated by praise nor depressed by malicious criticism. He develops intrinsic powers. He becomes a moral giant. He achieves super-normal strength.

Vyasa, the famous author of the *Vedanta* aphorisms, had a son called Shuka, who at an early age showed signs of spiritual development. He was therefore sent by Vyasa to the court of Janaka Videha, a great king and sage, for higher spiritual training. The boy was kept by the orders of the king waiting outside at the gates of the palace in cold and hunger for three days and nights. He was made the butt of all the passers-by. But the scoffs and sneers, hunger and cold did not disturb the serenity of the boy's mind. He was then ordered to be brought into the palace, given the best of rooms and treated with the utmost lavishness. He was brought before the king in

the court assembly hall There was music and dancing Fair damsels thronged the place The king ordered the boy to take a cup of milk and go round the throng of gay singers and players seven times without spilling a single drop of milk This he did with complete success The noise and the dancing did not perturb his mind He was cool as cucumber, unaffected by the giddy crowd The king dismissed him saying You have come to my court You know the truth go home '

Intense desire to serve others and complete self-abnegation from the bedrock of *Karma Yoga* It is not even necessary that a *Karmayogi* should be one who believes in God or the immortality of the soul Swami Vivekananda expounds this point very beautifully in the following passage "*Karma Yoga* therefore is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works The *Karmayogi* need not believe in any doctrine whatever He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness and he has to work it out himself Every moment of his life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the *Gnani* applies his reason and inspiration and the *Bhakta* his love "

It is true that except a fanatic it would be difficult to find even one man in a million, who would come up to the ideal of *Karmayogi* as depicted above To work without a motive is an impossibility Action has to be fed with the fire of ambition or aspiration to reach God. Buddha is the one solitary instance in the history of mankind who came up to the highest standard of the teaching

of *Karmayoga* He worked for mankind without any aspiration to reach God. He said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." Buddha was really an extraordinary man, so selfless so deeply engrossed in the suffering of others. His philosophy is the highest, his motives extraordinarily unselfish, his sympathy the widest. He loved men and birds and beasts alike. He toiled for them, worked for them endlessly and ceaselessly, without a morsel of hope for himself in this world or beyond. Has history produced a greater man than Buddha?

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti means real, continuous search for, and love of God. We have already stated in the previous chapters that God is both manifest and unmanifest. The unmanifest Absolute is the Principle, the Law, the Supreme Spirit, the cause of all Causation. It is the ONE without beginning without end, the Sustainer of all Creation. He is the Spirit that is immanent in nature and transcends it. But the *Bhakta's* devotion is not to the Impersonal God. He raises an image in his heart and pours out his adoration and worship to the Divine Person. He seeks union with God but that God is Personal not Impersonal. He pays homage to God by drawing upon his imagination and investing Him with some form, some image. He seeks union with the Absolute through His manifest body for the purpose of achieving perfection and freedom in eternity. Does not *Gita* say, "His hands and feet are everywhere, His eyes, heads and mouths are facing in all

directions. His ears are turned to all sides; and He exists enveloping all."

We have already stated that there are three ways of reaching God: through *Karma*, through *Bhakti* and through *Gnan*. But the easiest way to reach the unmanifested Absolute is to worship the ONE through any of His manifested forms. Krishna says to Arjuna:

"The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater, for the goal of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach.

"But those who consecrate all their actions to Me and regard Me as their dearest one, who meditate on Me and worship Me with single-hearted devotion,

"I save them full soon, O Arjuna, from death and the ocean of mortal life, their minds being ever set on Me.

"Fix thy mind on Me alone; let thy thoughts rest in Me. And in Me alone wilt thou live hereafter. Of this there is no doubt." (Chapter XII, 5, 6, 7, 8.)

In *Bhakti Yoga* sincerity and devotion play the most important role. When a man enters into that feeling of intense desire and love for God he attains eternal freedom, the joy which surpasses everything. He becomes God-intoxicated and in that mad love of God, he forgets all the mundane things of life. Possession and power, place and position, name and fame fade away from the horizon of his ambition. His heart is full of love for all. There is no malice, no hatred, no meanness, no thought of self. He becomes a sea of love. He loves all, whether man or bird or beast alike.

The whole universe is centred in the ONE and to become ONE with the Absolute, from which has emanated this world and the other worlds is the goal of all kinds of *yoga*. Nature is the environment of all life. To get freedom from the bondage of nature means to get cessation from the wheel of birth and death. It means liberation, salvation *nirvana*, call it what you like. One of the ways to salvation is by *Bhakti Yoga* love universal love, devotion sincerity detachment.

We have explained how a *Karmayogi* tries to get his liberation by renouncing the fruits of his labour. This process of achieving eternal freedom means a sort of coercion. But in *Bhakti* there is no compulsion, no coercion. It is most natural. A man must get into that feeling that intense desire for God and when this feeling comes to him naturally, spontaneously, without an effort, he begins to enter into a new arena of life. His mind heart and soul get so saturated that he sees everything with the eyes of divine love. He may be an imperfect man when he starts *Bhakti Yoga*. But by slow steps he throws off his imperfections. He rises from imperfection to perfection from materialism to spirituality, from manhood to Godhood, or as Dr Arundale puts it, 'from the dust of the unconscious upto the diamond of the self conscious' (*The Lotus Fire* page 198). Sincerity of the aspirant in this *yoga* is a *sine qua non*. Without sincerity there can be no *Bhakti*.

Bhakti Yoga is of two kinds—the lower and the higher. When a man worships God according to his own notion of a personal God there is the danger of his developing a narrow ideal of worship. This leads to fanaticism and we know what evil seeds fanaticism can spread to the detriment of humanity. The lower type of *Bhakti*

Yoga, which breeds in man a sense of superciliousness and pride in the superiority of his own cult and his notion of God, is dangerous. It leads to fanatical wars. The *Ishvara* of the Hindus is the same as the *Allah* of the Moslems and for the Hindus to claim that their *Ishvara* is greater than the *Allah* of the Moslems is frivolous and mischievous. For God, whether we name Him as *Allah* or *Ishvara*, *Jehovah* or *Ahura Mazda*, is precisely the same. They are only different names, different labels given to the same object of divine worship. This danger of fanaticism lurks only in the initial, preparatory stage of *Bhakti*. When the aspirant enters into the higher state of *Bhakti* the feeling of bigotedness disappears.

We have said that sincerity is the foundation of *Bhakti*. There can be no *Bhakti* if there is no sincerity. How can this thirst for God, this restlessness for God be fed, if there be no sincerity? An honest atheist may become a true *Bhakta*, for his honesty compels him to constantly probe into the realm of truth and he eventually may stumble on the stone of Reality. But an insincere devotee is an utter failure. How can hypocrisy ever succeed?

The true *Bhakta* does not reason or argue. He is a man of emotions, impulses, aspirations. He offers the *puja* of his heart to the Beloved freely, spontaneously. The intense love for God does not come by merely reading books or going to a church. It is an innate desire, which is quickened by intercourse with godly persons.

When a man feels *Bhakti*, i.e., true love and devotion towards God, his life becomes transformed. He is purified. He feels exalted in his emotions. He is elevated in his thoughts. A new world dawns on him. He sees everything in a new light. His heart and mind are filled with...

a new song, a new symphony. His soul is enriched. He turns towards heaven.

"Love is immortal," says Narada, "obtaining which man becomes perfect, becomes immortal, becomes satisfied, obtaining which he desires nothing, grieves not, hates not, does not delight in sensuous objects, makes no effort for selfish ends; knowing which he becomes intoxicated with joy, transfixed and rejoices in the Self. It cannot be made to fulfil desires, for its nature is renunciation."

The doors of *Bhakti* are open to all. God dwells in the heart of the saint as well as the sinner. No one is debarred from worshipping Him. He is accessible to all. Says the *Gita*, "They who take refuge with Me, O Partha, though of the womb of sin, women, *Vaishyas*, even *Shudras*; they also tread the highest path." (IX, 32.)

We are all travellers in life and different destinies are cut out for us according to our past *Karma*. One is born in the family of a *Brahman*, the other in the home of a *Shudra*. But that does not mean that it is the privilege of the *Brahman* alone, who frequents the temple and discourses on the scriptures, to seek communion with God. The doors are wide open to all and the ways of approaching God and doing His *Bhakti* are also various. So long as there is sincerity of purpose and burning love, it is not necessary that a *Bhakta* should be a man of great learning also. The majority of Hindus commence worship with the help of images and pictures. Idol worship is condemned in many religions. Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam teach breaking of the idols and worshipping ONE GOD, who is Absolute, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient. But in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, (Discourse IV, Verse 2,) Lord Krishna

says, "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine. O Partha "

These lines of the *Gita* justify even idol worship, provided the image is an aid to the worshipper in concentrating his mind on *Brahman*. There is *Brahman* even in the clay of the pot or idol and intense concentration on the idol, with a view to seeking unity with the One Eternal, is not wrong. But he must realize the truth that there is ONE God and not many, ONE who is the sole Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Multiplicity of Gods and worshipping them as such, as we witness in decadent Hinduism is wrong. There is nothing objectionable or wrong if a devotee seeks the help of an "outward or mental image of God," but he must understand that his homaga is due not to the multiplicity of gods but to ONE Eternal God, who rules us all. Just as there is multiplicity of rays in the homogenous mass of light and there are myriads of drops in a sheet of water. God is immanent throughout nature. He reveals Himself through various forms. It is this ONENESS in Multiplicity which we must worship and not the Multiplicity itself, which is a bare cloak of the Transcendental the One Spirit, without a second.

One *Bhakta* says 'I examine atom after atom and there is not one particle of matter which is outside Thee, but Thou art not aught that is visible and yet naught exists without THEE." There is a profundity of thought in the above lines. God is the smallest of the smallest, the subtlest of the subtlest. He pervades through nature. Just as an atom cannot be divided so is He indivisible. Let us then remember Him through any shape or form, reasonable or foolish, commendable

or not commendable, and the worshipper, if he has intensity of feeling, if not wisdom, will be lifted up and taken Godward

Says Lord Krishna in the *Gita* "Those who have fixed their minds on Me and who ever steadfast and possessed of supreme faith, worship Me—they do I consider perfect in *Yoga*" (XII 2)

Faith plays the most important role in *Bhakti Yoga*. There can be no life without faith. As Count Tolstoy says "If a man lives, he believes in something. If he did not believe that there is something to live for, he would not live." It is the man's faith that determines his position in this life and his destiny. If he thinks that all the good things of life are created for his enjoyment and that he must live for himself and not for others, it is a poor idea and he is furthestmost from the realization of TRUTH. But if he realizes that God permeates through every bit of creation like ether, that there is God within him and that he must bow to the great *Atman* and yearn for its perception, a great transformation comes over him.

Faith is not opposed to Truth. Faith in the highest or real sense is Truth. It is unenlightened narrow faith that is the harbinger of evil. "That which is a mere prejudice of childhood which has never known doubt which ignores science which cannot respect or understand or tolerate different convictions—such a faith is a stupidity and a hatred, the mother of all fanaticism."

There is a story that Dussasana, the brother of Duryodhana, attempted to strip naked the chaste queen, Draupadi. But he could not succeed. When he removed one garment she was clothed in another and the more he went on pulling out garment after garment she was covered mysteriously by newer garments to the utter confusion

of the despoiler. 'Our reason refuses to give any explanation how this happened. Intellect is not everything. It plays only a secondary part. Swami Vivekananda described it as "a mere street-cleaner, cleaning the path for us, a secondary worker."

The search after God begins with faith. But it should not be a narrow, prejudicial faith. It is through faith, implicit faith in God, that we can realize Him. The knowledge of possessing an immortal soul of divine origin gives infinite strength and courage in the struggle of life. When Alexander the Great threatened to kill a sage, the latter said, "Me you can never kill. I am He, the eternal and infinite. Me swords cannot pierce, fire cannot harm, water cannot moisten, nor winds wither. How could I be slain?" The *Bhakta* has this true faith in his devotion to God. It is this that raises him to sainthood. It is when he realizes that he is one with the Infinite that he steps over the bounds of desires and egotism, which keep him in bondage. This world is real but when he realizes his oneness with *Brahman*, he sees its unreality. The world ceases to exist for him. He becomes **ONE WITH GOD**.

The following story of the Bhil, who became a *Bhakta*, is of great interest. In a town, in Upper India, there lived, some years ago, a merchant, by name Nanda. He was religious-minded and gave large sums of money in charity. Believing in the worship of Shiva, he built a temple and had the image of Shiva decorated with pearls and diamonds. The temple attracted the notice of a hunter who lived in the forest nearby. Being a Bhil, he was not allowed like other outcast Hindus to enter the sacred precincts of the temple. But he stole one night into the temple, when there was no one there, and offered his *pūja*. Being a hunter, he thought that the way he could please his God was to offer the meat of the game he had

shot and he put it near the image No flower, no incense but red flesh was his offering

Next day when the *Brahmin* in charge of the temple opened the door he was amazed at the sight of the image having been polluted It was removed to save it from further pollution

The huntsman came again to the temple His heart was cut to pieces when he saw the altar empty there being no image of Shiva He cried with the anguish of a child Where hast Thou gone away my Beloved God How can I live without Thee? Thou art to me my life my blood my *Atman*, my all in all Pray, forgive me, if I have sinned My eyes long for Thee This battered bruised soul of mine hungers for Thee Free me from this bondage This separation is more than I can bear Take me in Thy arms Listen to the agony of my soul Vouch safe to me Thy presence

As he prayed tears streamed along the rough cheeks of this man of the forest He tore a piece of flesh from his living body and offered it to Shiva The image was not there but he could raise it on the altar of his heart He prostrated at full length on the floor and prayed and prayed fixing his gaze on the inward image, seeking Shiva's grace And lo he was rewarded He got the vision of the God What the merchant could not attain, in spite of his worship and profuse charities that man of the forest, by his sincerity sacrifice and true devotion succeeded in getting He got God's vision Is it not said in the Bible? (*Math 7 10*)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile
(*Bible Psalm 32 2*)

It is purity, sincerity, devotion and sacrifice that bring us nearer to God. It matters little whether a man is learned or not. Sincerity and purity are the first essentials in *Bhakti Yoga*.

There is an Islamic legend that a cobbler in the simplicity of his heart always prayed, that he may see God so that he may cobble shoes for Him. Moses was much offended at this nonsense. He rebuked him. But soon he saw his mistake. He was reprimanded by God.

Tu baraye wast kardan amadi

Nai Baraye fast kardan amadi

'Thou wert sent down to bring souls near to Me,
And not to thrust them thus away from Me.'

There is also the story of a juggler recorded in the Chronicles of Roman Catholic Christianity. He made a frugal living by his trade. One day he went into a church and was much impressed by the sight of the monks praying before the image of Virgin Mary. In all simplicity of heart the juggler, after the monks had departed, started his juggler's tricks, thinking that it was the best way in which he could make his heart's offering to the Holy Virgin. When the monks peeped through the chinks of the door they saw the juggler, with his head on the floor and feet in the air. They were so annoyed at this rustic idiocy that they wanted to thrust him out of the church hall. But at that moment they saw in a vision the very Madonna descending from her pedestal and wiping the forehead of the juggler with her mantle. They were ashamed and cried out, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

To develop the powers of *yoga* it is necessary to have intercourse with people of higher spiritual attainment. In

ancient India a *guru* would take some selected persons as his *chelas* and teach them and bring them up in the science of spirituality. The association of *guru* and *chela* is a sort of institution sanctified by hoary tradition and religion. It is in vogue even now, in India, but not to the extent it was in the ancient days.

The impressions even of a good public lecture do not last long. But in a small circle where the *guru* knows intimately every disciple that sits at his feet and the disciples know their *guru* and his high religious attainments, an intimate spiritual bond is created. The flame for spiritual quest is kindled in the hearts of the disciples. It keeps burning for it is constantly fed by their intimate intercourse with the *guru*.

Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa wielded a most remarkable influence upon his disciples, of whom Swami Vivekananda was one. We get a very intimate picture of this intercourse in the biography of Swami Vivekananda. The greatness of Swami Vivekananda may be attributed to his contact with Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Spiritual reading ignites the flame. It is the *guru* that keeps it burning.

In the practice of *Bhakti Yoga* the essential qualities are sincerity, love, religion, purity of mind and body and patience. The *guru's* qualifications to teach his *Chelas* are a matter of greater import. For, if he is not a man of the right type there can not be much of spiritual development in the pupils. He should be one who has grasped the spirit of the scriptures and not an adept in mere words, which are like dry bones of knowledge. He must have fervour and enthusiasm. He must be a sincere man without any selfish motives of gaining name or fame, wealth or position. He should teach out of love and not for any worldly consideration.

and the universe was formed. Behind the universe is the eternal *Sphota*, the creative power of the Infinite, which is described as the Logos or the Word. *Om* is symbolic of *Sphota*. They are inseparable. *Om* is therefore the holiest of holy words. It is, as Swami Vivekananda describes, the mother of all names and forms.

Om, really speaking, is the combination of three letters: A, U, M. Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, "I am A in the letters." A is the throat sound, M is the lip sound and U represents the impulse, which is given to the utterance of A, which begins at the root of the tongue and ends with the lips. *Om*, therefore represents, as Swami Vivekananda says, "the whole phenomenon of sound production."

Another word, which is equal if not of greater significance, is *Ahura Mazda*. There is a sort of electric thrill in this word. It contains a world of ideas—Truth, Purity, Sincerity, Duty, Service, Love, Wisdom. By meditating on this one word alone a new light dawns, a new transformation is achieved. It is a most significant term in the whole vocabulary of the religious scriptures of the world. *Ahura Mazda*, as we have already explained, means Wise Ruler. By meditating upon this word, we gradually transform ourselves and feel spiritual dominance, a spiritual conquest over mundane desires.

The tremendous effects of wise meditation are known only to those who practise meditation daily, regularly, without any break. We never miss our engagements in worldly life. Do we? Why should we not then enter into daily meditation and prayers at fixed hours of the day and night for the holiest of holy objects,—communion with God, our invisible Master and Lord?

Religion is the highest knowledge, but it should be the ideal of a *Bhakta* never to speak ill of any one's religion, never to criticise it, never to hate it. The worst wars in the world are those caused by religious fanaticism. The pages of history have been defiled by the wars of the Crusaders and the persecution of the Inquisition. Even in India—the most peaceful country in the world—the Hindu-Moslem tension is a significant factor. To love one's own religion with extreme fervour and zeal and to decry any one else's religion is the negation of *yoga*. There are various paths leading to salvation. The various religions are like the branches of the same tree, rivers that enter into the same ocean, mountain-paths that lead to the same summit. 'Honour thine own faith and do not slander that of others,' is the saying of a great Buddhist and this thought is in agreement with the fundamental teaching of the Brahmo Samajists. They teach 'No sect shall be vilified, ridiculed or hated.'

Fanaticism is bad but the other extreme *viz.*, religious liberalism, which feeds only idle curiosity and makes a man change his ideals, as he changes his dress every day, is also pernicious. It is most desirable to know the essence and fundamentals of the various religions of the world with a view to widen one's outlook and to cement the ties of common friendship. But it is necessary that each one should stick to the path of religion in which he is born to attain salvation and not to desert it for the ideals of other paths. To put it in the words of Swami Vivekananda "It is a sort of intellectual opium-eating."

The idea of *yoga* is to strengthen the invisible bodies and to vivify them with divine energy. We have already described the various bodies and their relation to the astral, mental and spiritual planes in our book '*The Other*'

World.' In the practice of *Bhakti Yoga* the purity of the body is as necessary as of the mind. The Hindus give too much importance to the question of food. There is no doubt that *satvic* food is better for the human body. Meat diet and alcoholic drinks should be avoided. But too much of fanaticism in regard to food is not good. It is a sort of lunacy. As Swami Vivekananda once said wittily, "The religion of the Hindus is in the kitchen-pot." There is no necessity for such extreme importance as is given to food by the Hindus. What the true *Bhakta* is required to do is to control his passions, his desires and such *satvic* food should be taken as does not create any passion in the human body.

A true *Bhakta* considers his body as the soul's temple and, as such, he must keep it inwardly and outwardly clean. Just as the reflection of the moon shines very clearly in the silent, pure waters of a smoothly flowing river, a good, pure and healthy body is of considerable assistance to the *yogi* in controlling his mind and concentrating it upon God.

It is a mistake to neglect the body and to let it waste away. Long fasts and vigils are "no prescription for spiritual enlightenment." "The body is the means of *sadhana* and it should be maintained in good order. There should be no attachment to it but no contempt or neglect either of the material part of our nature," says Shri Aurobindo.

We eat to live. The body has to be sustained. And the *yogi's* ideal is to eat plain, simple food, as much only as may be absolutely necessary to keep the body in a fit state of health. It is very necessary to avoid any overstrained condition. Neither over-eating nor under-eating is helpful to the growth of spiritual life.

Fasting as a means of stimulating our craving for spirituality, is enjoined in various religions. But if it injures health it should be abandoned. The views of Shri Aurobindo on this question are of great importance. He says in his book, *The Bases of Yoga*, "It is a fact that by fasting, if the mind and the nerves are solid or the will-force dynamic, one can get for a time into a state of inner energy and receptivity which is alluring to the mind and the usual reactions of hunger, weakness, intestinal disturbance, etc., can be wholly avoided. But the body suffers by diminution and there can easily develop in the vital a morbid overstrained condition due to the inrush of more vital energy than the nervous system can assimilate or co-ordinate. Nervous people should avoid the temptation to fast, it is often accompanied or followed by delusions and a loss of balance. Especially, if there is a motive of hunger-strike or that element comes in, fasting becomes perilous, for it is then an indulgence of a vital movement which may easily become a habit injurious and pernicious to the *sadhana*. Even if all these reactions are avoided, there is no sufficient utility in fasting, since the higher energy and receptivity ought to come, not by artificial or physical means, but by intensity of the consciousness and strong will for the *sadhana*."

(Pages 158, 159 & 160)

Shri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'Verily yoga is not for him who eateth too much, nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even to wakefulness, O Arjuna!'

(VI, 16)

Inspiration is greater than learning. And those who are not learned but are tender in heart often draw inspiration. They get inspiration through various means,—

by studying the lives of saints and seers, nature's beauty, music, works of art and so forth. The only value of religious rites and ceremonies is that they can give also some inspiration and evoke devotional fervour and feeling for God. This is most beautifully illustrated in the life and example of Nanda, the pariah saint.

Nanda was born and lived about six hundred years ago. He belonged to the depressed classes and as such he was denied even the elementary rights of a human being. The untouchables were not allowed entry into any temple. They were the discarded ones. Decadence in Hinduism had set in to such an extent that the Hindu society held a very large majority of their people in economic bondage and denied them even the rights of education and spiritual uplift. Nanda was unlike other boys. Anything grand, beautiful and mysterious at once attracted him. There was in him a sort of an inner urge for spirituality even when he was young. And this he gratified by making figures of God in clay. These clay models became his objects of worship. The temples, festivals and *Vedas*, from which he was excluded because he belonged to the depressed class, attracted him the more. If he was not allowed to enter a temple; could he not serve God, he argued, by making some useful things and offer them to the Deity? The temple drums were made of leather. Nanda prepared the leather and supplied it for the use of the village temple. These offerings were made in love and piety. The boy, as he grew in years, took to meditation which came naturally to him.

Once hearing the tale of the beauty of the temple at Chidambaram, far off from his village, he was fired with the desire to visit the place. But how could he, who was only a slave working for wages, be free to visit the holy

place? He could not muster courage to ask his employer to give him leave. And when he at last actually asked for leave it was refused. He felt the hand of God in the refusal. 'God knows what is good for me, infinitely more than I know. I must resign myself to His will. When He thinks that I am fit to visit Chidambaram I shall again ask leave of my *Brahmin* master.' He bided his time working on the field more resolutely, but his mind and heart were completely absorbed in the thought and love of God. Constant meditation, prayers and repetition of *mantras* completely transformed Nanda's life. The transformation was apparent to everyone. When he went into trances his friends mistook his unconsciousness for the trick of some devil. And they offered sacrifices to save him from ruination. They little knew that his trances were the result of his communion with God.

Nanda went to his master and asked leave for the second time to visit Chidambaram. He waited tremblingly for a reply, as if his whole destiny hung on it. The *Brahmin* knew instinctively that Nanda was sincere. He also felt the strange influence of his holy soul upon him. But putting on a bold face and silencing the inner voice, he began to argue that he (Nanda) was not doing his work properly, that the harvest season was drawing near, that the corn was to be reaped. He told him that he could give him leave only after the harvest.

Nanda's heart leapt with joy. He ran to the fields but he came back soon. 'Do me the favour, sire, and come to the fields!' The master was astonished. He saw his fields reaped and harvested and the corn glittering underneath the sun like mountains of gold. 'What! how could such a miracle happen in such a short time?' He perceived at once that it was the doing of God. Nanda's

piety and devotion to God had wrought the miracle. He fell at once at his feet. "You are no longer a pariah slave. You are the holiest of men, the greatest of *Bhaktas*. Go to Chidambaram and give me your blessings before you go."

Nanda left on pilgrimage to the holy place. When he reached it he was filled with boundless joy and he began to sing:

"O come and dance, the joyous dance,
O come and dance, the Dancer's dance
O dance and shun all ignorance."

He was lost in raptures. It is said, for three days and nights, Nanda kept vigil and sang rapturous songs. Tradition says, he was then taken by the *Brahmin* and ordained as a saint.

Another great *Bhakta* is Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Nanda came from Southern India. He was born of the lowest class. Shri Ramakrishna belonged to the highest class and lived and died in North-eastern India. It may be said of Nanda that we have no living memory of the man. In the case of Ramakrishna, it is not so. He lived only a few decades ago. We get a most graphic account of his life from the accounts of his pupils who came into intimate touch with him and on whom he exercised a most beneficial influence. To speak in the words of Max Muller, this man, Shri Ramakrishna, who professed to teach no man, was "a real *Mahatman*." He was not a teacher who taught. He lived his teaching. He was not a man of any academic education but he exercised a great influence on some of the best thinkers of India who came into intimate contact with him. Who were the pupils that were transformed by his touch?

Keshub Chandra Sen, the great Brahmo Samajist leader; P. C. Muzumdar, another great Brahmo Samajist, and an ardent admirer of Christian missions; G. C. Ghose, the great Bengali writer; and above all that great soul, Swami Vivekananda, who made America listen to him with rapt attention when he advocated the claims of the *Vedantic* philosophy of ancient India at the Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893.

Shri Ramakrishna was an unconscious teacher. He was a man of God. When we philosophise about God we cannot really perceive Him. There is a vast gulf between intelligence and spirituality. An intellectual giant may be only a spiritual babe. Intelligence is satisfied with the mere crust. Spirituality goes beyond the crust. It reaches the very heart of things which is Divinity. Intellect reduces a living thing to an idea. God is a concept. To Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa God was the soul of his soul. He was deeply absorbed in God. The world was completely a forgotten book to him. His heart was the temple of God. He was so submerged in the God-idea that book learning, social service, moral idealism were all eschewed as if they did not exist. There was no room for them. When a man or woman falls in love does he or she require any knowledge of philosophy, anatomy or biology? Shri Ramakrishna was peculiarly a man of this divine intoxication. He had developed *Bhakti* of the very highest type.

Plato says that the soul is a citizen of the world of Eternal Reality. In the ladder of instinct, intellect and intuition, the last is the highest rung. Intellect is higher than instinct. Intuition is higher than intellect. It is the eye of the soul. It is the inner vision. It is the ray that penetrates the folds of the visible and invisible worlds. Man, finite as he is, is dominated by a desire to

merge his finite being into the Infinite. Prayers and meditation lead the way of the Spirit. They are transforming agencies. The deepest reality in man is the sense, the cognition, of the divine within him. Socrates compared himself to a mental mid-wife whose vocation was to help "to bring to birth the higher life in each of his hearers" Communion or union with God is not a theory or an illusion. It is a reality. It is not a postulate. It is an experience.

Man's mission in life is to unfold the divinity in him. One German mystic says, "I am as great as God. He is as small as I. He who wants God must become God. God only can receive God."

The *Bhakta* is so devoted to God that the thought of God comes to him all the time. He is like a lover that dreams of his beloved. Whatever he does is an offering to God.

"Oh life, Beloved,
In THEE alone is eternal love,
In THEE alone is everlasting thought."

Divine *prem* comes when a man transcends material desires. A true *yogi* is like the lotus flower that floats on the water, but is not immersed in it. He lives in the world but he is not attached to any earthly desires. He sees God in everything and loves every one without distinction. The *Gita* says, "The same am I to all beings: there is none hateful to Me, nor dear. They verily who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I also in them." (IX, 29.)

"Can spirits be measured with a yardstick?" This is the ironic way in which ignorant critics denounce Spiritualism. They think that they are mightily clever and pose as such. We have explained in our book, *The Other*

World by taking several instances of noted phenomena corroborated by the evidence of eminent scientists that Spiritualism is a science. Contact with discarnate spirits is possible by the development of mediumistic powers in man. If in spite of the overwhelming and convincing arguments and proofs in favour of Spiritualism one refuses to believe in it it is a clear indication that he does not want to divert from the settled convictions of his life.

The yogic communion with God has however nothing to do with any psychic development. A *Bhakta* is on a totally different plane. He is spiritual. It is this spirituality of his character, his sincere faith in God and longing for God, that form the basis of his approach to the Eternal. The yearning for the infinite must find its ultimate fulfilment. Such is the experience of mystic *yogis* who contemplate and meditate on God day and night. God is the Reality and when man gets this vision every thing else in the universe fades into unreality.

Bhakti and mysticism are synonyms. What is mysticism? It is the cry of man for peace and rest which we can get only in the bosom of the Lord. It is the yearning of the finite for the infinite. It is the soul of religion. It is the nectar, the perfume, the melody of unsurpassed sweetness. It is the junction of the Humanization of God and Divination of Man. The *Sufi*, the *Bhakta*, the mystic, the devotional poet, the *fakir* who takes the name of *Allah* on his lips all day long—all are of the same class.

Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* is a book of Christian mysticism. Wordsworth is a mystic poet who sings rapturous songs of Divine Love. The following lines are extremely lyrical.

In such access of mind, in such high hours
 Of visitation from the living God,
 Thought was not *in enjoyment it expired*
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request,
 Rapt into still communion that transcends
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
 That made him it was blessedness and love '

(*The Excursion*)

Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* is a book of mystical poems The poet asks

'What divine drink would Thou have, my God !
 From this overflowing cup of my life? '

The *Bhagavad Gita* or *The Lord's Song* is a vital contribution to the inspirational literature of the world. It covers a vast ground and treats metaphysical questions in an inspiring manner The Parsi scriptures also provide inspirational literature the best type of which are the *Gathas*, Lord Zoroaster's own poetical composition The *Psalms* in the *Bible* make very inspiring reading There is a tendency among modern writers to write on devotional subjects Dustoor Dr Dhalla's *Homage Unto Ahura Mazda* may be considered as a beautiful contribution to the devotional literature of the Parsis

Sufism has played an important part in influencing the religious life of people Rumi speaks of the joyous union with God in the following lyrical lines

'Man's life is like this hollow rod
 One end is in the lips of God,
 And from the other sweet notes fall
 That to the mind the spirit call
 And join us with the All in All

night, the moon that throws its silvery radiance on the wide expanse below, the stillness of the night, the gorgeous robe of the flowers when they bloom in their freshest hues at early dawn and the green grass that waves softly with the breeze—these create that symphony in the heart, which takes us nearer and nearer to God. These are the ways and means to strengthen our inner urge to reach Godhead.

“When your mind is silent,
 From within the Beloved speaks and guides,
 Your whole being then responds
 And you realize the Beloved
 As your prop, friend and refuge.
 How sweet the link
 That binds you to Him I
 Now you enter the realm
 Where Love and Joy
 Are eternally at play,
 And you are lost.
 The Beloved is yourself—
 You are the Beloved.”

The song of Solomon in the *Old Testament* is considered by Swami Vivekananda as “one of the most beautiful parts of the *Bible*.” Solomon built a temple of the Lord on Mount Moria in Jerusalem. It took him seven long years. A vast number of artists was employed. When the tabernacle was completed it was a monument of artistry, incomparable in beauty of design and craftsmanship. It was frozen music. Solomon prayed at the Altar with such sincerity of fervour and soul—“If heaven or heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built”—that, we are told, fire fell from heaven and the Lord appeared a second time to

Solomon and said to him 'I have heard thy prayer and I have sanctified this house which thou hast built and My eyes and My heart shall always be there '

Such is the effect of prayer Such is the devotion of man to God when he pours out his whole soul

The ideals of *Bhakti Yoga Sufism Mysticism Neo-Platonism* are more or less identical The object is absorption in God by methods of deep concentration, prayers meditation and complete surrender to divine influence Even in the midst of the worst trials a true devotee never doubts divine justice 'I am Thine, Oh Lord! All is Thine Thy will be done. Such is the yogi's submission to divine judgment. *

We know the story of Job in the *Old Testament* He was known for his piety and devotion to God But Satan doubted if Job could remain true to God if he was deprived of all his possessions his cattle and his children God therefore put Job to test He sent a violent wind which swept away all his cattle and fodder There was a rain of fire from heaven and his children perished

Job was smitten with grief But his faith in God was not shaken He said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord!
(Job Chapter 1 21)

Job was then put to another severe test. He was inflicted with a most terrible and loathsome disease on earth He was covered with sores and ulcers from top to bottom But he bore it patiently and in complete submission to the will of God When his wife said to him sarcastically 'Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God and die ' he replied to her 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh What? Shall we receive

good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job, Chapter 11, 9 and 10.) Job showed the true *yogic* spirit and attitude in his great calamities and surrendered himself to the will of God.

Our fundamental struggle is with our ego. When this ego is suppressed the devotee is transformed. He does not speak in terms of "I" and "Mine", but in terms of "Thou" and "Thine." The subject becomes passive and the object becomes now active. The union of the *Atman* with the *Paramatman* becomes feasible only if God wills it. Nothing can happen without His grace. We have the theory of the elect in Christian theology also. "Many are called but few are chosen." Many have to struggle but only when God wills can His grace descend into the heart of the devotee. Then only does the ego disappear completely and the *Atman* gets the unique experience of the indescribable bliss of union with the *Paramatman*.

"God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." (St. John, 4-24.)

As St. Paul said, "There is a natural body. And there is a spiritual body." Of the two, the body and the soul, it is the latter that is the true self and to live in the spirit and not in the flesh, which is subject to decay, is the true aim and goal of life. At death, the spirit is separated from its prison-house,—the body. But if we consider this, mundane life as death, it is possible for the *Jiva* to seek union with the *Paramatman*, even when man is imprisoned in the earthly body.

The true *Bhakta* can become **ONE WITH GOD**. When the Christ said, "Ye are Gods", he was affirming a truth, which is hard to be conceived by an ordinary person but which is a living experience of true *yogis*. *Bhakti Yoga* is "a *yoga* of the Memory of the ONE in the

Many", as Dr Arundale beautifully puts it. It is a yoga of the perception of the Divinity, Unity, Oneness in all things. "All are ONE, for all Life is ONE."

Gnan Yoga

We have explained in the former sections of this chapter that the *Karmayogi* seeks salvation by working without any expectation of a reward and the *Bhakti* by means of his mystic love and devotion to God. We now come to the third kind of yoga, viz., *Gnan Yoga*, which aims at salvation through *gnan* or knowledge. What is knowledge? Is it that which we get through intelligence? Intelligence is a weak instrument. The knowledge got through it is limited by the senses. The *Gnanयोगी* aspires for something higher than sense-knowledge. He aspires to the innate knowledge or rather wisdom that the *Atma* possesses.

Spiritual study for intensification of our conviction is necessary. The *yogi* on the path of true *gnan* knows the nature, significance and relationship of his own *Purusha* with *Prakriti*. He starts with certain convictions. He is not argumentative. He is calm and silent. He wants to explore the possibilities of the Divine Self by means of his rational faculties. He is decisive in his mind. His studies are directed to intensify his belief in the immortality of the soul and the necessity of finding freedom by shedding fear by giving up attachment to life, egoism and all those qualities which act as obstacles in the path.

Life is too short for argumentation. The *Gnanयोगी* does not waste his time on all and every kind of study. Like the bird swan known to the Hindus by the name of *Raja-Hansa*, which takes up milk but leaves off water,

he knows the art of picking up that which is valuable and leaves off that which is of no use. He trains his intellect for that purpose. He never argues, for argumentation disturbs the mind and the serenity of the mind in the *yogic* path is a *sine qua non*, as we have already observed.

The *yogi* knows that ignorance is the cause of egoism, attachment, aversion and clinging to life. As Patanjali says, these are the five pains, which the *yogi* has to overcome. In fact, ignorance is the cause, the parent, and the remaining four are the effects, the results. They cause misery. But our soul is all bliss. Why should we then be miserable? To attain blessedness which is the goal of life, we must liberate the soul from the bondage of the body. We must drive off this ignorance that treats the soul, as something material, non-effulgent, impure, effervescent. True *gnan* and not sense knowledge tells us that we must throw away all false gods and idols, superstitions and desires, attachment to this world, craving for wealth and power, name and fame. We must rise above worldly notions of life. We must discard the unreal and say definitely 'I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not thought, I am not even consciousness, I am *Atman*.' What are the instruments of knowledge? (1) *Indriyas*, sense-organs (2) *Manas*, mind (3) *Buddhi*, discriminative faculty and (4) *Chitta*, mind-stuff. To go beyond these by subjugating them and completely identifying himself with the changeless Self,—*Sat Chit Ananda* is the *yogi's* goal. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'When we begin to deny, all must go until we reach what can not be thrown away, or denied, which is the real 'I'. That 'I' is the witness of the universe. It is unchangeable, eternally infinite. Now, layer after layer of ignorance covers it from our eyes, but it remains ever the same.'

We can never know God, because God is not the object of knowledge. But we can get a glimpse of the Absolute from time to time if we discard *maya* and try to see the reality, *that man and God are one*. God is the only real existence. *Om Tat Sat* "*Brahman alone is true, all else is false and I am Brahman*." In this one line we get the essence of the whole *Vedanta* philosophy. It teaches the greatest truth of all, *viz*, abstract unity in the universe, the germ and foundation of *Gnan Yoga*.

When the war of the Mahabharata was over, a question was asked: "What is the religion of liberation?" In *The Last Message of Shri Krishna*, Chapter XIV, we find the following which is a reply to it: "I consider that as knowledge, by means of which one sees the nine, the eleven, the five and the three things in beings and also sees the One in all these things."

Swami Madhavananda interpreting the above lines, explains the significance of the numerals used. The nine things referred to are *Prakriti*, *Purusha*, *Mahat* (Cosmic Intelligence), *Ahankara* (ego) and the five *Tanmatras* (subtle matter). The "eleven" are the five organs of action and the five organs of knowledge and *Manas* (Mind). The "five" are the elements, *viz*, the earth, water, fire, air and ether. The "three" are the *gunas* *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. The idea is that the multiple universe is not essentially different from God, the Supreme Cause, which is ONE.

Patanjali says: "The cause of that which is to be avoided is the junction of the seer and the seen." Who is the seer? Who is the seen? The seer is *Purusha*, the Self of man, the effulgent pure soul, what is called *Atman* by the Hindus. The seen is the whole of nature—*Prakriti*. *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are two separate entities. To avoid

the junction of *Purusha* with *Prakriti* or to separate the soul from the body is aimed at by the *Gnanyogi*, for he knows that he gets the sensation of pain even when the soul is all bliss, because it is joined to nature. What is the purpose of *Prakriti*? It is to give experience to the *Purusha*. Let us understand what *Prakriti* is,—nature as we call it. It is composed of the finer and grosser elements. The same three qualities or organs are to be found in the whole universe as in man viz, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*.

Before creation, nature was formless and without a name. This was a state when the three *gunas* were in perfect balance. When that balance was disturbed the elements began to mix with one another and the universe was formed. In man, too, we have the three *gunas* which we may define as the spiritual, the human and the animal in man. True knowledge comes when *Sattva* prevails. It brings illumination.

When the soul is joined to the body it is to gain experience. The *Prakriti* is the field of experience for the *Purusha*. This life is a snare, a net, a nightmare, so long as we allow *tamas*, the gross in us, to dwell. However effulgent, pure, changeless and immortal the *Purusha* is, there cannot be the sense of supreme happiness unless we realize the function of the soul and ponder upon its sublimity and its affinity to God.

Swami Vivekananda gives a beautiful illustration. There are two birds on a tree, one perched on the top and the other hopping on the lower branches. The lower bird is eating fruit. It is happy when it tastes sweet fruits. It is miserable when it eats bitter fruits. It turns its gaze occasionally to the other bird on the top sitting calmly, majestically, in all its perfection and beauty. It tries to

hop nearer to it. But again it tastes fruits, sweet and bitter, and it forgets to look up. After many repeated experiences of sweet and bitter fruits it eventually comes near to the bird above and, to its wonder, it finds that the bird is no other than its own Self.

We all are like the lower bird. We forget the Self and consider the world to be a real world when as a matter of fact it is only *maya*. "To separate ourselves utterly from matter and all belief in its reality is true *gnana*," says Swami Vivekananda in his discourses on *Gnan Yoga*.

Let us take another illustration. Indra was the King of gods. He became a pig and was wallowing in mire. He believed he was quite happy with a she pig and a lot of baby pigs. The gods were at their wits' end when they saw their king fallen so low. They cried out in anguish and tried to awaken him to his senses. But they failed. Calamities then came upon him. The she-pig and the baby pigs died. He was filled with grief and anguish. The gods then cut open his pig-body and Indra then awoke from his dream. He realized how he had fallen from Godhood to piggery. Life is a trap and we have to wring our salvation out of our own experience. Momentarily, we forget our high destiny. It is only when adversity comes that it awakens us. Experiences are necessary for the liberation of the soul. We are bound by our intelligence but we can be set free by our soul. The human body, the craving for God and a *guru* who can guide us to God,—these are the three ways, by which the soul can be released from its bondage.

To speak metaphorically, the immortal soul is like a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but its centre is in somebody. Death is only a change of centre, God is like

a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but its centre is everywhere. If we were to get out from the narrow centre of the body we could realize God. The *Gita* says, "The *Vedas* deal with the three attributes, be thou above these three attributes, O Arjuna, beyond the pairs of opposites, ever steadfast in purity (*sattva*), careless of possession, full of the SELF." (II, 45.)

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we find a very beautiful description of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, Matter and Spirit. *Prakriti* is compared to the body and the body is called the field and *Purusha* is called the Knower of the field. What is the nature of this field and what are the powers of the Knower? The following verses describe *Prakriti*.

"The great Elements, Individuality (*Ahankara*), Reason (*Buddhi*) and also the Unmanifested, the ten senses and the one and the five pastures of the senses (the five organs of knowledge, or senses, the five organs of action, the mind and the objects cognised by each of the five senses)" (XIII, 6)

'Desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, combination (the body), intelligence, firmness, these, briefly described, constitute the Field and its modifications'" (VIII, 7)

And what are the qualifications or attributes necessary to understand *Prakriti*, with a view to realize "the Beginning-less Supreme Eternal?" These are, 'humility, unpretentiousness, harmlessness, forgiveness, rectitude, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self control, dispassion towards the objects of the senses, absence of egoism, insight into the pain and evil of birth, death, old age and sickness, detachment, absence of self identification with son wife home and constant balance of mind in wished for and unwished-for events, unflinching devo-

tion to God by *yoga*, resort to sequestered places, absence of enjoyment in the company of men, constancy in the wisdom of the Self and understanding of the object of essential wisdom

The *gunas* are all born of Matter *Prakriti*. It must be understood that both *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are without beginning. In the *Gita*, *Prakriti* is called "the cause of the generation of causes and effects." "Spirit (*Purusha*) is called the cause of the enjoyment of pleasure and pain "

Spirit (*Purusha*) seated in Matter (*Prakriti*) useth the qualities (*gunas*) born of Matter (*Prakriti*) attachment to the qualities (*gunas*) is the cause of his births in good and evil wombs " (VIII, 22.)

"Supervisor and permitter, supporter, enjoyer, the great Lord, and also the supreme SELF, thus is styled in this body the Supreme Spirit (*Purusha*) " (XIII, 23.)

And we are finally told that "He who thus knoweth Spirit (*Purusha*) and Matter (*Prakriti*) with its qualities (*gunas*) in whatsoever condition he may be, he shall not be born again " (XIII, 24)

One author gives the analogy of spider and its web to describe the relationship of *Purusha* with *Prakriti*. It may not be wrong to compare the two to a boatman sailing in a small ship all alone on the vast ocean, in storm and calm, keeping his eyes fixed on the distant shore which he has to reach. One of a thousand, a hundred thousand, nay even a million, may or may not reach the shore. For, so vast is the ocean and so varied are the experiences. But if he is well balanced in mind and conquers the tempests of nature he may reach the goal. As

Patanjali says, "The nature of the experience is for him. Though destroyed for him, whose goal has been gained, yet it is not destroyed, being common to others." Though *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are indissolubly linked with each other, it does not mean that they are identical and cannot be separated. *Purusha* can be separated from *Prakriti* when nature's attractions completely cease to exist for him. But *Prakriti* cannot be destroyed, for it exists for other *Purushas*. *Purusha* is all-seeing. *Prakriti* is blind. The combination of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* is well described by the analogy of the lame man, who has sight and yet is being carried by a blind man.

To destroy our belief in the reality of matter and separate ourselves from it is the goal of knowledge. God is the only Reality. We must break the delusion of the world. It is only then that we can rise above pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. It is only by intensifying our mind on God that we can succeed in identifying ourselves with the Absolute Unity. Each one of us is not only a drop to be absorbed in the ocean. There are infinite powers in the soul. It is not a part of that Being, but as Swami Vivekananda says, "Every soul is that Being in full."

The main teaching of the Theosophists is that there is unity in diversity. Nothing could be truer. When Christ started his teaching he said to his followers, "There is a father in Heaven, pray to him!" He then preached, "I am the vine,—you are the branches." He finally taught, "I and my Father are one; the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." This is the highest truth or as the Parsis say, *Vahistam Manoh* (Absolute Conscience). The Relative Conscience (*Vohu Manoh*) should not come into conflict with the Absolute Conscience (*Vahistam Manoh*). This one teaching alone of such universality

of thought and application, which is found in the *Gathas* of the Parsis, entitles the Iranian scripture to be recognised as unique in the scriptures of the world. The *Gatha* 43, 1, says: "Only that, which is good for any body—whatsoever can be good for one's own self." Good is that which can be universalized. God is good.

When a man attains to this highest truth, his life becomes rich with love and goodwill for all. It is not ordinary or scientific knowledge that he has attained. It is *Atma Vidya*, spiritual consciousness, vaster than material or scientific consciousness.

Atma Vidya is a science which teaches man his hidden nature and his divine destiny. "Man is the *Jiva* come from the eternal *Purusha*. The Cosmos is *Prakriti* and the way of man's unfolding his divine destiny is *yoga*." The *Jiva* is an exile. It has strayed from its home—the spirit-land—and comes into this world. If it gets lost in the play between *Purusha* and *Prakriti* it cannot go back to its original home. It must come back again to this world of *maya* for further experience and purification. If the *Jiva* turns its attention to this inner world and plays its part in the outer world which it cannot denounce, for it has to live both in the outer and the inner world, the path of re-union with God becomes clearer. Whatever a man does, he should do as an act of sacrifice.

"Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest, whatsoever thou doest of austerity, O Kaunteya, do thou that as an offering unto Me." (*Bhagavad-Gita*, IX, 27.)

Sacrifice is given a high place in the *Gita*. It describes the various types of sacrifice but of all, the sacrifice of wisdom is the best.

"Better than the sacrifice of any objects is the sacrifice of wisdom, O Parantapa. All actions in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom." . (Gita, IV, 33.)

"Others also sacrificing with the sacrifice of wisdom worship Me as the One and the Manifold everywhere present."

. (Gita, IX, 15.)

"We have already explained that the *Gita* is the Science of the Spirit. It deals with the subject of *Brahma-vidya*. It shows the way to re-union with the Absolute. It speaks of the paths by which this re-union can be effected. It teaches unity in the universe. This unity cannot be seen with the eyes of the intellect. *Manas* is only an instrument to weigh, observe, analyse, criticise, collaborate and collate facts of natural phenomena. It differentiates, it separates. But higher than the mind is what is called *buddhi*. It is a consciousness of unity.

"It is said that the senses are great; greater than the senses is the mind (*manas*); greater than the mind (*manas*) is Reason (*buddhi*) but what is greater than Reason (*buddhi*) is He (the Supreme)." .

(*Bhagavad-Gita*, III, 42.)

As is said in the *Yoga Vasistha*, "God is neither Vishnu alone nor Siva alone, nor any embodied being, nor all bodies are merely compounds of the five elements; nor is God the mind, but He is the *Gnana*, the Self, beginningless and endless." The real God cannot be conceived by the mind. The *Bhakta*, we have shown, tries to realize God by devotion and prayers. He is a creature of emotions. He rejoices; he weeps, he gets into spasmodic trances. These alternate weepings and re-

joicings are the outcome of a highly struog, emotional nature There is action and re action in him At one time he is in ecstasy His religious fervour soon ebbs away and a spirit of depression seizes him. This is not good for the tranquillity of the mind Perfect mental serenity is absolutely necessary in God realization It is therefore that the *Gnani* is greater than the *Bhakta*, for he is free from the extremes of excitement and depression It is said in the *Upanishads*, 'In my illumined heart the Sun of Wisdom doth ever shine He never riseth nor doth He ever set "

(*Maitreya Upanishad*, II)

The same thought that is contained in verse 42, Discourse III of the *Bhagavad Gita* which we have already quoted, is corroborated in the *Upanishad* It says, 'Let the wise sink his senses in the mind sink his mind in reason sink reason in the great soul and that in the *Brahman* "

(*Katha Upanishad* I iii, 13)

We know that unity is the ideal of *yoga* We begin with analysis and end with synthesis It would not be wrong to consider religion to be the oldest science More than four or five thousand years ago the *Rishis* of India realized God and they passed on their experiences to others They gave birth to religious scriptures As we have already explained, religion is a question of experience It is therefore that we say that religion is a science, the final knowledge It is not a sense bound knowledge but a knowledge found by transcending the limitations of time, place and causality We have to transcend the body It has to be looked upon only as an instrument for achieving perfection It is God, the Self the immortal *Atman* which is the only Reality.

Man has to identify himself with this Absolute Spirit. He must think that he is universe, that he is God. As Swami Vivekananda says, "Religion is the science which learns the transcendental in nature through the transcendental in man." Transcendental experiences cannot be translated into the language of reason. No logic, no argumentation, no reasoning, no metaphysics, no abstract thinking can bring any one to God realization. It is a personal experience of prophets, saints and seers. Their experiences should be a guide to us and what they experienced and felt, we can also experience if we discard the forms and creeds and get to the source, by internal and external purification of mind and body and cogitating upon the fact, that there is only one Reality and that is God. The ego manufactured world has to be first abandoned. The ego is the villain of the piece. It has to be subjugated and mastered.

We can escape the delusion of the senses only by going to the centre. God is the centre. He gives forms to others but He is Himself Formless. He is Changeless. He is Free. He is Eternal. He is Infinite. How can we be free to realise Him? Without freedom it is impossible to realize God. The shortest way to freedom is purity of heart, abandonment of all sensuous pleasures and giving up the fruit of our work. God's freedom is our essence. This is what binds us to God. The minute we discard everything that is unreal and stick only to that which is real, we become transcendental in nature and free like God. Freedom means equality. When we reach that high stage of spiritual perfection we look upon every one with the same eye, be he rich or poor, intelligent or stupid, good or bad. Sinners are as much our brothers and sisters, as those who are virtuous. The knowledge of how to be the ONE WITH GOD makes us look upon even sinners

as those in whom too God dwells We should make no distinction We should not exult over our being virtuous Sinners are our own kith and kin who are to be loved We should not pose as reformers We have no right Only love exists and love is God

We know how Christ used to dine and stay with the publicans and sinners. Though the most perfect man on earth, he never shunned them but embraced them like a mother without the least manifestation of any superiority. He was all love in the treatment of sinners. When people spoke ill of Mary Magdalene and pelted stones at her, it was Christ who stopped them "Let him who has not sinned even once in life, throw stones at her" and they felt ashamed. Love is the greatest factor in life It is said of one great saint that he prayed, ' Let me go to hell with the sins of the whole world, but let the world be saved '.

Christ and Buddha lived their lives to save the world from sin and they worked their way in life through LOVE

Freedom comes when all attachment to the idea of name and form, creeds and churches ceases. It is only then that a man realizes his Divinity. Man has to evolve himself. Mrs Annie Besant very beautifully says in her book, *The Evolution of Life and Form* " Only life can measure life, only life can respond to the vibrations of the living Man's work is to unfold himself, to bring out of the depths of his own nature the Divine Powers that he hidden therein, not in the senses but in the Self ' (Page 14)

We have already said that in essence the nature of man and God is the same There is nothing presumptive in this statement It is a fundamental truth of all

religions The *Vedas* say, "Thou art hat." The Hebrew Scripture says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him " According to the Zoroastrian scriptures—and Zoroastrianism is the oldest religion in the world—man is a divine spark. He emanated from the Supreme Lord and of his own accord "descended into matter, with a view to fight through to a conquest of matter and to complete the circle of evolution, into his original the Lord "

The *Vedas* say, "Spirit is the best " Zoroastrianism says, "Purity is the best " According to the ancient tradition, no man could become a sage unless he was a saint. When we say that religion is the oldest science, what we mean is that in the olden times, when the *Vedas* flourished and Zoroaster preached the religion of *Ahura Mazda*, there was no conflict between religion and science. They were wedded together The ancient science studied the world, to put it in the words of Mrs Annie Besant, "from the standpoint of life, which is evolving " The ancients studied life as a whole They knew that forms were the expressions of life. The history of modern science makes a totally different reading At first it was antagonistic to religion, for it believed in matter and refused to go beyond it Reason, intellect and the senses formed the instruments of the scientist to examine the vast problem of the universe They came to the conclusion that the atom was composite matter, with properties that never changed, that a carbon atom was a carbon atom from times immemorial and will remain a carbon atom for eternity It is only now that the scientists have begun to realize the error of their findings The discovery of electrons and protons has revolutionised their thought The atom is not an individual solid particle but a 'vortex

themselves to a stage of perfection, that can realize the "*unifying energy in the Self*." When this is achieved the secrets of universe are unveiled.

The following passage from Mrs Annie Besant's lectures on *The Evolution of Life and Form* will be found very apt to illustrate the point of unity, which the ancient religions preached and to which Modern Science is tending "Science is mounting into the invisible world and is trying to measure and to weigh that which therein it finds Now this tendency to unity is the testimony to the One that underlies all manifestations, only one Force, only one Matter, endless diversity of forces, transmutable into each other, endless diversity of forms, which break up again to re-combine only one Force under all forces, one matter under all forms It is seen that the very fact of harmony and of evolution points to a root unity, and that eternally independent, self-moving particles would only perpetuate a chaos "

Shri Shankaracharya is considered the most learned commentator of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Upanishads*. His searching analysis of the ancient learning, as contained in the *Vedas*, places him in the rank of the immortals The main feature of his philosophy is the teaching of the non duality of God He has beautifully elaborated the thought germane to the ancient Hindu-philosophy that *Samsara* or phenomenal existence is unreal It is this that causes the bondage of births and deaths and the only way to get freedom from this enchantment is to realize God as the only Reality This realization comes through knowledge not acquired by mere reading of books, but by personal experience and through the grace of a spiritual teacher

To consider the world as a reality is like mistaking the rope for a snake. Shankaracharya, in a very beautiful

allegory, shows the unreality of the world. Can the world be managed by the son of a barren woman? Can thirst be quenched by the waters of a mirage? Just as a pot is possible because of the virtue of clay, the phenomenal life is possible because of the virtue of God. The relationship between the world and the *Brahman* is the same as that between the pot and the clay. If we see the pot it is *ipso facto* the clay that is seen. If we see the world it is only the self-resplendent *Brahman* that is seen. The sense universe is only a fraction of "that infinite spiritual universe projected into the plane of sense-consciousness."

The world exists because of the immanence of God in everything whether stone or dust, tree or bird, brute or man, earth or sky. The immanence of God in the universe is a solution to all the complex problems of life. We know the story of Guru Nanak, the apostle of Sikhism. He went one day to Mecca and tired, he slept on the pavement in a mosque with his feet turned towards the holy *Kaba*. The *Mullas* were infuriated. They thought that he had insulted *Allah* by sleeping with his feet turned against His holy seat. The meek reply of Nanak was: 'Turn my feet where He is not.' Is He not the ONE in all things?

We have already explained how modern sciences are beginning to feel that matter is not at all the cause or substance of Creation. The gross is melting into the fine. From physics to metaphysics it is not a long distance. In fact, we have to own that God alone is the Reality, the cause of Creation and the conception of life must lead us to the study of things Beyond. A straight line, if it is infinitely projected, becomes a circle. We begin with God and we must come back to God. There is unity in nature. There is unity within us. The forms

are multitudinous, no doubt. But they can all be resolved into ONENESS. The science of Chemistry is trying to do this in its own department. All known substances are resolved into their original elements. One day science will show that there is one element that is the source of all elements. *Vedanta* preaches this final unity, the unity between the internal and external principles.

This leads us to the conclusion that the laws governing nature are the same in principle as those governing the human soul. We all are evolving. Just as in nature, by applying the powers of our intellect we can culture a wild plant to yield to us a larger fruit, so *yoga* offers a method for accelerating the speed of our own spiritual evolution. *Buddhi* is that part of our *Prakriti*, which has to be thoroughly exploited to achieve human perfection on the spiritual plane of life.

This world is "a dance of shadows." It is illusory. We place false values on this life. If we understand that the universe exists for the sake of Self, we would not digress into fruitless search for happiness. We would go straight to the goal which can give us true joy, lasting happiness. This can be attained in the shortest time by the knowledge that God alone is the Reality and all else is a shadow. God works His plans to manifest Himself in countless ways. We see His power in the star that twinkles in the heaven and the particle of dust which we tread from the smallest thing on earth to the highest planet in heaven. The same laws that apply to the universe apply to man also. As Mrs Annie Besant says 'The laws by which the Self unfolds its powers in the universe, from the fire mist upto the Logos, are the same laws of consciousness which repeat themselves in the universe of man. . . The laws of evolution of consciousness in the universe are exactly the same as

the laws of *yoga* and the principles whereby consciousness unfolds itself in the great evolution of humanity are the same principles that we take in *yoga* and deliberately apply to the more rapid unfolding of our own consciousness
(*An Introduction to Yoga*, pages 4 and 5)

Yoga is the shortest circuit to the unfolding of human consciousness to reach God. The laws may be different in manifestation in the early stages. But they are one for the whole evolution. As Mrs. Annie Besant says: "Whether you are thinking of the unfolding of consciousness in the universe or in the human race or in the individual you can study the laws of the whole and in *yoga* you learn to apply those laws to your own consciousness rationally and definitely."

The idea of the unity of Self is very beautifully brought out by Swami Vivekananda in his book *The Science and Philosophy of Religion*. He says the *gnani* must completely eliminate the idea of body or mind. He must drive away the thought that he is the body. He must fix his mind on perfection; nay, he must rise even above the notion of perfection for it is only when he identifies himself with God that the ideas of good and evil which are only relative terms disappear. "I am free through eternity. I am never bound. I am the God of the Universe through all eternity. It is in this strain that a *gnanyogi* must feel and express himself."

The universe is one. We are in essence one with God. He is the origin of the universe and the wheel of *samsara* can only be destroyed and man freed from the bondage of the body when we realize Him who is the destroyer of the darkness of *samsara*. The following *slokas* in *The Last Message of Shri Krishna* translated and annotated by Swami Madhavananda beautifully

express the whole philosophy of *maya* and the transmigration of the soul.

"This body which is created by the Lord's attribute, known as *maya*, is verily the cause of man's transmigration. And the knowledge of the Self serves to destroy this."

"Therefore, by means of discrimination one should unite the soul to the Absolute Self which is in the body (meaning, which manifests itself through it) and remove the idea of reality in the body etc.

(Cb. V, page 74, *Sloka*s 10 and 11.)

Pleasure and pain are indispensable factors in the struggle of life. But the *gnani* attains such calmness of mind by dwelling his mind on God, who is the essence of Perfection and who is the only Reality that by slow stages he becomes quite indifferent to all happenings in life. Pain does not affect him. The knowledge of Reality and ONENESS of God makes him rise above all misfortunes and sufferings. Pain is a great absorber of the dross in human nature. It purifies. It teaches. It inspires. It accumulates wisdom for the next stage of life in the cycle of births and deaths.

God is Bliss. Man's soul yearns for happiness. When he has paid off his *karmic* debt by a life of good deeds, sacrifices, austerities, devotion and complete surrender to God, he feels he is lifted up slowly in to the presence of God. The *gnani* gets illumination. He becomes full of raptures. "The whole of his vehicles" is swept away in the wave of the glory of the Self manifested. He is now face to face with God. He feels the thrill, the ecstasy, the divine rapture. He becomes entirely a transformed being. The alternate waves of sorrow and delight make no impression upon his tran-

quil mind, which is now rooted in God. He accepts joy. He accepts pain. He thinks both are good for him. How can a *gnani* who has had a glimpse of God, be affected by any sense of earthly delight or pain?

Man is made in the very nature of God, and he must realize this truth of truths, that he has to go on and evolve as God. There is no progress if nations fight. Wars are the greatest set backs. They retard man's progress and civilization considerably. History has to be studied from a different angle. Competition is the bane of society. Ignorance is the root cause of mischief. Selfishness is the step sister of ignorance. Take an example: If there is a fire in a cinema house, men rush out to escape from the burning flames, little knowing and understanding that instead of all rushing out together, if they could step out one by one, in good order, giving a chance to every one to escape, all could escape from a burning death, instead of being crushed to death at the doorway in the general *melee*. Evil exists because of our ignorance. The soul is pure, it is immortal. Even the soul of the murderer is pure but he commits the heinous crime, in the forgetfulness of God by putting a wall between himself and the Lord.

The Infinite can be sensed only with the help of that which is infinite within us. What is that infinite within us? The soul. The world is transitory. The mind is transitory. The body is feeble and perishable. Even our thoughts are not eternal. The soul alone has the stamp of immortality and eternity on it. We must therefore study the soul and evolve it to become the lever to lift us to Godhead.

All the unhappiness and misery one suffers in this life are his own creation. And he must take the responsibility upon his shoulders to undo the wrong

perpetrated, whether in the past or in the present life. He must gather strength to forge his own way to the goal of life. He is not alone in this journey. Every good thought, every good word, every good deed of his, finds a ready response in the hearts of the angels in heaven who watch and guard him. It is cowardly and sinful to put any blame upon anyone for one's own suffering. God alone knows what is good and had and a complete resignation to His will is the only way to true salvation.

Says the *Vedanta* philosophy, 'Know the truth and be free in a moment.' If we feel that we are **ONE WITH GOD** and the whole universe—men and women, plants and animals, angels and archangels,—when the feeling of separateness is gone, there cannot arise in us any consciousness to hurt or injure any one. If you resolve yourself into that **ONENESS** there can be no cause for sorrow, fear, injury, bad feelings or bad motives. They all disappear like mist before the first rays of the sun. "Kill out this differentiation, kill out this superstition that there are many. He who in this world of many sees that One, he who in this mass of insentient sees that One Sentient Being, he who in this world of shadows catches that Reality, unto him belongs eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else."

God is the basic element that sustains the myriad things in life which have myriad forms, colours, sounds, feelings and understandings. Man has no existence outside Him. It is only by transcending the limitations of the senses through the methods of the higher yoga, that the knowledge, the vision of the **ONENESS WITH GOD** comes to the yogi. He merges himself into the Cosmic Voice. He becomes divinely **ONE WITH GOD**.

The prophets, seers and saints were yogis of one type or other. Shall we include Mrs. Annie Besant as a



DR ANNIE BESANT

yogin? Yes This woman of the West had an Eastern soul No Westerner had done so much for the political, educational and spiritual uplift of this country as Mrs. Annie Besant in the recent past What a marvellous personality! What intellect! What oratory! What energy and enthusiasm! Why was she able to dedicate her life to the cause of poor India, which was not her homeland, with such spirit of sacrifice and devotion with such fearlessness of consequences, with such sincerity and love? She employed her extraordinary talents for the good of India, because she saw with the vision of a prophet that India, the land of the *Rishis* required to be stirred up and taken back to those exalted heights of spirituality from which she had fallen Persons like Mrs Annie Besant are like prophets, not born for one age or one country They are the beacon lights of all countries and for all times Her spiritual eyes saw the vision of unity and, a true *yogin* as she was she worked and laboured incessantly, through the channels of the world-wide Theosophical movement for the achievement of the goal of universal brotherhood Mrs Annie Besant was the happiest embodiment of all kinds of *yoga Karma, Bhakti, Gnan*

Raja Yoga

Man wants to know the Truth It is a mistaken notion that religion is based on mere faith and belief. We reiterate that religion is an experience Our prophets and seers experienced the facts regarding man's internal nature his soul, his kinship with God and his ultimate destiny Zoroaster speaks of seven *Amasaspands*—the seven archangels—and is said to have spoken to *Ahura Mazda* through *Bahman Amasaspand* and

Sarosh Yezd Christ, St Paul, St Peter, each said, 'I see and I know' Muhammad got a spiritual awakening when his evolved soul was able to talk with angel Gabriel It establishes the fact that knowledge is not that which is limited to the perception of our five physical senses and the mind. We have to touch the super-conscious and the unconscious Greater than the senses is the mind greater than the mind is *Buddhi*, the will, and greater than the will is *Atman* the Soul God.

Spiritualism has proved the existence of the finer and higher regions beyond the physical plane,—the astral, mental and spiritual worlds As we go higher and higher, the atmosphere becomes finer and finer As Swami Vivekananda says, 'Whatever is is one. Let us say it is a sort of tapering existence, the thickest part is here and it tapers and becomes finer and finer the finest is what is called spirit the grossest the body. And just as it is here, in the microcosm, it is exactly the same in the macrocosm This universe of ours is exactly like that it is the gross external thickness and it tapers into something finer and finer until it becomes God'

(*Realization and Its Methods* page 58)

Raja Yoga is a science of the mind It is a study of mind by the mind The mind is an all pervading thing like the soul and its powers are very great

Raja Yoga offers a method by which the internal knowledge of the soul can be gained Intense concentration of the mental powers is creative of knowledge It causes illumination *Raja Yoga* is a science like any other science Our physical sciences deal with external facts and phenomena By means of observation and with the help of scientific instruments Dame Nature's secrets are unravelled by science for human benefit. But *Raja Yoga*

is a science which does not deal with external facts but with the internal machinery. In observing external facts the subject and object are different. It is easier to control external nature and the achievements of science, though great, pale into insignificance in comparison with other achievements. The wonders of electricity, radio and steam, that modern science has achieved, are nothing in comparison with the supernormal phenomena, such as have been proved by modern spiritualism viz., clairvoyance, clairaudience, automatic writing, table tilting, levitation psychometry, psychic photography and spiritual healing. We have referred to these phenomena in our book, *The Other World*.

These phenomena are scientific facts and not products of a man's frenzied brain or mere hallucinations. God's creation of man is so wonderful that there are latent powers in him, which can be manifested, if they are rightly dealt with. There is no secrecy about it. It is true that for a long time our Indian *yogis* kept their secret achievements to themselves. It is this national trait of secrecy that has done a lot of mischief. It has given ground to the belief that *Raja Yoga* is nothing but miracle or mystery-mongering. It has also led to the science being neglected and less known. But, living in the modern age, the contact with the scientific West has done us this good in India that we have begun to think that it is better to spread knowledge, even if that be of the most occult nature and most difficult to follow, than to hoard it in the secret cells of hermits and *sanyasins*.

Raja Yoga is a very difficult science, because subject and object are not different as in other sciences. It is a science of the mind and the mind itself has to probe and analyse its own nature. It is easier to concentrate upon

external objects but when the mind has to turn its powers internally to find out the internal truths, it is exceedingly difficult. God is described as the finest of the finest and the subtlest of the subtlest forces and the finest thing in the universe is thought. *Raja Yoga* aims at ONENESS WITH GOD, by the psychic method of perfecting the mind and so controlling it as to gain complete mastery of the universe.

The mind is the most powerful instrument for good or evil. If we think of Angels we shall go to Angels. If we think of Devils we shall go to Devils. Our thoughts mould our destinies. As Buddha says, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts." Zoroaster was the first prophet to lay emphasis upon the power and potency of thought. Not only words and actions, but even man's thoughts, he said, whether they were good or bad, were accountable for his weal or woe in the life hereafter. The *Vedas* also lay great stress upon this truth. Our modern science has also begun to realize that thought is a tremendous force. We know the story of Humphrey Davys. When he recovered from semi-consciousness, caused by too great a dose of the laughing gas, while lecturing to his students in the class-room, he said to them, that the universe was made up of ideas. He could see only subtle vibrations around him and he perceived the truth, that thought vibrations only mattered and nothing else. We are told by spiritualists that thought is the language of the Other World. The universe hangs on thought vibrations.

Man is what he thinks. "The external world has no existence independent of the mind." Each man's mind is united with that of another man and the minds of different

individuals are like fragments of the Universal Mind. There is nothing strange in the theory of transference of thought. It is not a mere theory but a fact. Thoughts, dissolved into ethereal vibrations, are reformed when they touch the brain organ of another person. It proves the Continuity of Mind. **ONENESS OF LIFE**

'If we control thought we control destiny. This is true. And the object of *Raja Yoga* is to achieve liberation of the soul by control of thought. Bondage or freedom, misery or happiness depend upon the measure of control we secure over the mind. In the *Vedas* the mind is compared to the nave of the wheel of the whole world. The mind is the nave of this wonderful wheel of the world, which deludes by its movements when with intelligence and effort it (the mind) is stopped from moving (i.e. desiring, willing, thinking, imagining, etc.) the wheel of the world is stopped. (*The Philosophy of Yoga Vasistha* by B.L. Atreya page 252)

The mind is an instrument of the soul by which the latter gets an experience of the external objects. The external organs or instruments function because their nerve centres are in the brain. It is not the organ of the eye that sees the external things but that they are perceived by the nerve centre in the brain. The experiences of the outside world are felt by the mind and the mind communicates those perceptions to the soul. The mind is made of the subtlest of matter but the soul itself is immaterial. The soul (the *Purusha*) becomes the witness of all happenings. The science of *Raja Yoga* teaches how the powerful rays of the mind can be made to concentrate upon the inner working of its own self and thus get at the bottom of the secrets of God's most wonderful creation, man.

It should be made clear that man is not only greater than the animal. He is greater than even the angel, for it is the plan of God that the liberation of the soul can be achieved through man's physical existence. Swami Vivekananda says, 'The human body is the greatest body in the universe and the human being the greatest being'

It is by means of the perfected mind that the *Raja Yogi* can plunge into the depths of the inner recesses of the mind. It means "concentrating the powers of the mind and turning them inward to know what is happening inward"

It is said that God made a sacrifice while creating the universe. He is the Supreme Being, without a second. But we see a dual principle working in nature—viz., Matter and Spirit. Man is a combination of matter and spirit, the lower and the higher self, the animal and the divine. The senses, the mind and the will belong to the lower self. The soul alone, which is the seed of the living body, is divine. It is spirit, not matter.

The scientists have proved that there is unity in life for all forms of matter, stones and trees, books and brooks are convertible into energy. Philosophy also teaches the same lesson of unity. There is one God who is immanent in nature and who transcends everything. To lead the life of the spirit is to realize God. To master the lower self is to liberate the spirit. *Raja Yoga* is a science which teaches how to liberate the spirit through the action of the mind.

It must be remembered that *yoga* is not a subject that can be taught from the platform. It is not a matter which deals with the intellect. Its concern is with the pure spirit. In the ancient days in India, it was taught by personal

contacts, the *guru* teaching his *sishyas*. Even so it is to-day. In no other way could this difficult subject be understood. No books on *yoga* would train any man in its method. No religion has laid down any definite method for teaching *Raja Yoga*. We know of saints in every religion. They rose to sainthood by dint of their own inward efforts. The Catholic religion teaches of "beatific vision." The saints were those who had this "beatific vision." Religion teaches us to aspire for it but it is only in the system of *yoga*, known to the Hindus, that we trace a regular method of developing the inward faculties in man, which bring him to that state of infinite bliss, called *Samadhi* or Divine Madness.

We cannot teach *Raja Yoga* but we shall still attempt to give a hazy idea of its method, purely with a view that it may inspire those who are fit for the higher life, to practice it in silence and submission with the help of a *guru*. India is the only country in the world which has produced great *yogins* by the practice of *yoga*.

Renunciation forms the most important factor in the practice of *Raja Yoga*. When a man mentally detaches himself from virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, when he is not perturbed by anything in life, victory or defeat, desires or doubts, he is said to have successfully renounced life. True renunciation is inward not outward. Such a man becomes a fit subject to practise *Raja Yoga* but he can do so successfully, only with the help of a *Rajayogi*.

In order to understand the practice of *Raja Yoga*, we must have a clear idea of the human vehicle. Man is a soul. He has a physical body which is visible and various other bodies which are invisible. The ethereal double is the vehicle through which flow the life force, *Prana*. It is *Prana*, that keeps the body alive. It is "a bridge to convey

undulations of thought and feeling from the astral to the visible, denser, physical matter." Beyond the etheric double is the astral body, then the mental body and then the spiritual body and the soul is incrustated in all these envelopes

We have said that man is a soul. He may be said to have an animal soul, a human soul or a spiritual soul, according to the degree of spirituality that he is able to manifest in his own person. Mrs. Annie Besant very beautifully describes in her book, *The Building of the Kosmos*, the various sheaths of the soul. *Atman* is the Reality but it manifests itself in different ways. It has five sheaths which have to be unveiled one by one, till the real light of the soul, which is the spark of God, is perceived.

The first is the food sheath, called *Annamaya Kosha*. It represents the physical or the visible portion of man. The second sheath is known as *Pranamaya Kosha*, through which *Prana*, life-force, circulates. The Theosophists call this sheath or body the etheric double, which we have already referred to above. This etheric body should not be mixed up with ether in the universe. It is quite different from ether in space. The third sheath is known as *Manomaya Kosha*, the body of passions and desires. Next to it, is *Vignanamaya Kosha*. *Gnan* means knowledge; the prefix *Vi* implies discrimination. It is a sheath of discriminating or analysing knowledge. According to the Theosophists it contains *Manas*, the 'discriminative faculty in man' of the higher type. The last is the Bliss Sheath, known as *Anandamaya Kosha*, the *Buddhi* sheath.

For the purposes of *yoga*, it is better to divide man into three parts. The lowest is the physical body, *Sthulopadhi*. This physical body functions not by itself but

because of the etheric double. Really speaking all the sense organs are in the etheric double. The harder castings only are in the physical body. The second part is what is called *Sukshmapadhi*, sometimes described as *Linga Sarira*. It is the vehicle for the *karmic* and *manasic* principles and, Mrs Annie Besant says, 'It is in this *upadhi* that the consciousness can make itself acquainted with the whole of the psychic plane.' The last is what is known as *Karanopadhi* the sheath, of the *Atman*, same as *Anandamaya Kosha*. These three parts are co related to the three planes of the universe viz (1) the physical, (2) the astral,—the psychic plane, the higher and lower, which includes the range of passions and desires and intellect and lastly (3) the spiritual plane, which is the highest. We have to get the consciousness of all these three planes and *yoga* aims at this. The scripture says that the universe exists for the sake of the soul. There is a unifying principle throughout the universe. The Supreme Spirit as Mrs Annie Besant says, is one with the spirit in man. It is therefore the object of *yoga* to realize this ONENESS with the Supreme Spirit, by the development of super consciousness, which ordinarily lies dormant in man.

The real life of man is not fully expressed in his physical consciousness. This consciousness is only five percent of his real life. It is the unconscious or sub conscious in him that constitutes the ninety five percent of his real life. The spirit or the unconscious self in us is the storehouse of instincts tendencies and disposition. It is the storehouse where lives the *Atman*. We have to penetrate into the fastnesses of the soul to get a key to the mastery of the universe.

One of the methods suggested in *Yoga Vasistha* is the deep affirmation of the one Reality to achieve the

liberation of the soul. We have spoken at great length — in fact, in our very first chapter—of the vital subject of God, which is the only Reality, and the thought of God as the only Reality must so absorb us as to make us forget everything else. There is God in the very stone image which a Hindu idolator worships. Idolworship, with this deep affirmation that there is God even in the stone is not wrong, though one would like to visualize God in better ways. By thinking of God every moment of our life, whether active or not active awake or asleep, we create a certain stillness of the mind. When we say our prayers we must not ask only for spiritual strength to fight our way in life, but actually affirm, that we are the *Atman*, the Self, that rules the universe. This is not egoistical. It is but one of the ways to awaken the inner consciousness.

The ideal of *Raja Yoga* is to free ourselves from the limitations of the body, the mind and individuality. If a man is able to dispel *Ahankara* the ego in him by annihilating the mind he realizes God.

Patanjali is considered to be an authority on *Raja Yoga*. His aphorism may be taken as a text book on this science. He describes *Raja Yoga* as a science for restraining the mind stuff (*chitta*) from taking various forms (*vrittis*). What do we mean by mind stuff (*chitta*) and *vrittis* (forms)? When I see a clock tower I note the hands of the clock and say what hour it is. Is it that I saw, because I had eyes to see? No. The eyes are only a secondary instrument. They are not the real organ of vision. The real organ of vision is placed in the nerve system of the brain. The eye is only an external instrument. To get a complete picture, we have to add the brain centre and the agency of the mind. Several times, it is noticed that when our mind is concentrated on a

certain object, even the nearest sounds are not heard. Why? Because the mind was somewhere else. Three things are then essential: (1) The external instrument whether of hearing, seeing, touching, tasting or smelling; (2) the organ within the brain; and (3) the attachment of the mind to the instrument and the organ. The mind takes the impressions of the external objects, through the instruments and organs and conveys them to the *Buddhi*, the discriminative faculty which, as Swami Vivekananda explains, reacts, "Along with this reaction flashes the idea of egoism." This medley of action and reaction is conveyed to the *Purusha*, the real soul. The various processes that take place in the mind which go to form this whole picture are the action of the organs (*Indriyas*), the mind (*Manas*), the determinative faculty (*Buddhi*) and egoism (*Ahankara*).

We hope we have explained what is meant by *chitta*. Now, as regards *vrittis*, what we mean by them is the waves of thought in the mind-stuff, *chitta*. *Vrittis* literally means whirlpools. Like gravitation or repulsion, thought is force. *Chitta* draws certain forces from the infinite storehouse of nature. If they are absorbed they become thoughts. As Swami Vivekananda says, "The mind is the instrument in the hands of the real man, who is behind it."

We reiterate that *chitta* is the mind-stuff and *vrittis* are the ripples and waves in the mind, caused by external objects or internal disturbances. *Vrittis* are the various things in nature, which disturb the mind. An angry word, ill news, injustice, maltreatment, pain and suffering create mental whirlpools. They require to be subdued. A still mind can alone subdue them. Memory, dream, sleep are also *vrittis*.

The mind is of three kinds. It is dark, when it has too much of *tamas* in it, generally found in brutes and idiots. Such a *tamasic* mind is bent upon injuring others. There is another state of mind—the *rajasic* mind. It is active. Its chief motives are power and enjoyment. The third and the best type of mind is *sattvic* mind. It is serene, calm. In such a mind, the waves cease. *Chitta* is the lake and *vrillis* are the ripples on the lake. If the mind is calm the ripples subside and we can see the bottom. The whole idea of *Raja Yoga* is how to attain that serenity of mind to get at the bottom of its internal nature.

Chitta is in every animal, from the lowest to the highest. It manifests itself as intellect only in the case of human beings. It is intelligence that plays a great part in the liberation of the soul. Man alone can get immediate salvation, not a cow or a dog.

Patanjali describes the eight limbs of *Raja Yoga* as under:

(1) *Yama*; (2) *Niyama*; (3) *Asana*, posture; (4) *Pranayama*, the control of *Prana*; (5) *Pratyahara*, restraint of the senses from their objects; (6) *Dharana*, fixing the mind at a certain point; (7) *Dhyana*, meditation; and (8) *Samadhi*, super-consciousness or deep concentration.

By *Yama* is meant "non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving of any gifts." The next step is *Niyama*. It means such virtues as "cleanliness, contentment, austerities, study and self-surrender to God."

The sole idea is that he who aspires to become a *Rajayogi*, must feel sure that he has so chastened his moral fibre as to enable him to aspire for spiritual knowledge, which requires moral and spiritual qualifications of a higher order.

The third step is *Asana*, posture. The aspirant in order to prepare himself for a higher state of spirituality has to undergo every day, regularly, certain physical and mental exercises. They purify the nerve currents. One should practise to sit in a posture in which he can remain for a long time. It is necessary to sit erect so as to keep the spinal column free. The head, the neck and the chest should be in one straight line. We shall understand why the spinal column should be kept free when we treat the subject of awakening the *Kundalini* in the pages that follow.

The idea of the various exercises is not only to make the body strong and active. *Raja Yoga* should not be mixed up with *Hatha Yoga*. The ideal of the latter science is to so build up the human body as to last for a very long time and withstand the attacks of diseases. A *Hatha yogi* can perform such miracles as to stop the human heart from beating. A *yogi* of this type may develop powers whereby he could be buried underground and still be found quite alive when he is taken out from the place of his interment. He can eat stones and pebbles, as if they were chocolate slabs. He can drink any acid and be not affected. He can swallow iron nails and pen knives and still be alive. But this type of *yoga* is useless. It is offensive to our intellect that we should develop powers for such unworthy purposes. A *Rajayogi* has a higher ideal. His purpose is liberation of the soul and not attainment of powers for public exhibition.

The fourth step is *Pranayama*. What is *Prana*? Some use it for the senses. Some think that *Prana* means breath. Swami Vivekananda defines *Prana* as that which causes the motion of the breath, that which is the vitality of breath. It is energy. It is force. *Pranayama* is a series of breathing exercises which change the

inner body of man. It gives the mind control over the body and the subtle forces and the nerve currents which are moving in the body.

Prana is intimately related to the mind. "What is *Prana* physically, is the mind on the psychic plane." If we stop the movement of the *Prana* in the body we stop also the activity of the mind. Swami Vivekananda considers *Pranayama* or the control of the *Prana*, as the flywheel of the whole bodily system. The breath that we take in first acts upon the lungs. The lungs affect the heart. The heart affects circulation which in turn affects the brain and the mind. The primary object of *Pranayama* is to strengthen the will. Let us explain what we mean by *Pranayama* and its working.

There are two currents of *Prana*, called the Sun (*Pingala*) and Moon (*Ida*), which pass through the brain. These currents acquire their names from the *Vayu-Nadis* along which they pass. From the description of these *Nadis* given in the *Tantric Manuals*, it is clear that they "have their origin or mouth as it is called" in the *Mula-sthana* or perineum and when the *Pingala* ends in the left nostril, the *Ida* ends in the right nostril. They thus "correspond to the gangliated cords of the sympathetic system which are situated in either side of the spinal column. At the cephalic end, each sympathetic trunk passes into the cranial cavity, arborises with the fellows of the other side and forms a plexus. Through this plexus the sympathetic trunks gain complex relations with the spinal cord (*Sushumna-Nadi*) where it joins the brain. This plexus is called in *yogic literature Bhruvuti Chakra*. At the caudal end, both the sympathetic trunks end in the pelvic plexus." (*The Mysterious Kundalini* by Dr. Relc, page 21.)

The spine is the *Brahmadanda* and when the exercise of *Pranayama* is performed, it is necessary for the aspirant to assume a posture, most easy for him, so as to keep the spine free. The aspirant must sit quite upright for easy spinal action. The exercise is described as under by Swami Vivekananda:

The right nostril should be closed with the thumb and air should be inhaled slowly through the left nostril. The aspirant should repeat the word *OM* four times when this process of inhalation is taking place. Then both the nostrils should be closed tightly by the thumb and forefinger and the head should be dropped on the chest and, firmly holding the breath in, the aspirant must repeat *OM* eight times. He should then lift up the head and remove the thumb from the right nostril and exhale slowly, repeating the word *OM* four times. When the exhalation is closed the abdomen should be forcibly drawn in to expel all the air from the lungs.

The same process should be repeated by pressing the left nostril with the thumb, inhaling with the right nostril, and repeating the word *OM* four times. Then the head should be dropped again on the chest and the breathing should be completely held in, repeating the word *OM* eight times. The head should then again be lifted up and the air should be exhaled from the left nostril, by removing the thumb and repeating *OM* four times. At the end of the exhalation, the abdomen should again be drawn in to empty all the air from the lungs. This whole process is required to be repeated twice, *i.e.*, there should be four *Pranayamas* two for each nostril alternately.

After a week of practice the number of breathings can be increased. It is better to take the advice of a *guru* in doing these so-called simple "*Pranayama*"

exercises, as they are likely to do harm, if the aspirant makes a mistake or becomes egoistic. These exercises are meant only for those who are spiritually-minded, who have thoroughly developed their characters and have an intense desire or yearning to get spiritual powers for the purpose of doing good to others in the love of God, the Infinite, the Absolute.

The most important thing in the system of *Raja Yoga* is the awakening of the *Kundalini*. We have explained the action of *Pranayama*. We cannot create a new force. But the vital currents can be controlled and made to change their courses and we can give a new direction to these forces. In order to understand how this can be done, it is necessary to understand also the awakening of *Kundalini*, which is the chief goal of *Raja Yoga*.

The spine, as we have said, is the *Brahmadauda*. At the base of the spine is what is called *Kundalini*. It is the reservoir of all the secret powers. It is symbolised by the *yogis* as a triangle containing a small serpent coiled up in it. To awaken this sleeping serpent is the object of *Raja Yoga*. By giving a new direction to the vital currents, we can open for them a new passage through the spinal cord. If we succeed in making the current pass through this new passage up to the pineal gland, we can separate the physical body from the invisible bodies for the time being. The *Shushumna* or apinal cord is a packet of very fine and brilliant threads and it is through this, by our meditating on it, we can reach the *Kundalini* at the base and concentrate our attention thereon. These vital fibres have two lotuses at the two ends. One end reaches the *Kundalini* at the base and the other end reaches the top lotus in the brain surrounding the pineal gland. Besides these two



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lotuses there are others with different numbers of petals and different colours. A clairvoyant can see the flowering and colouring of all these lotuses, which have their stems hidden, but which stir out as soon as the vital currents are made to pass through them by the awakening of the *Kundalini*, and by meditating upon each of them in turn.

Swami Gnaneswarananda gives a graphic picture of the *Kundalini*, both asleep and awake, in his book, *Divine Communion*. As one reads the rapturous description of the *Kundalini* there is the effect created like that of the breath of the rose-scented zephyr, flirting with the mind, deeply absorbed in the beauty and silence of God. We would refer the reader to pages 80-87 of the book, which is written in a picturesque style and is full of high and elevating emotions.

The *chakras* or force centres are described by C. W. Leadbeater in his book, *The Chakras*. It is an interesting book and contains several multicoloured plates to illustrate the *chakras*. There are seven *chakras* in all. They are situated in man's invisible bodies—the lower five in the astral body and the higher two in the *Manasic* body. They are connecting links through which energy flows from one vehicle or man's body to another. When they are undeveloped they are dull in appearance and are small circles, about two inches in diameter. When they are developed they are like blazing whirlpools, resembling miniature suns.

Muladhara is the Basic or Root *chakra* which is situated at the base of the spine. *Swadhisthana* is the Spleen or Splenic *chakra*, which is situated over the spleen or, to be exact, a little below the navel. *Manipura* or the Navel or Umbilical *chakra* is at the navel, over the solar

plexus. *Anahata* or the Heart or Cardiac *Chakra* is over the heart. *Vishuddha* or the Throat or Laryngeal *Chakra* is at the front of the throat. *Ajna* or the Brow or Frontal *Chakra* is situated in the space between the eye-brows. *Sahasrara* or the Crown or Coronal *chakra* is on the top of the head.

Leadbeater divides the seven *chakras* into three groups, which he classifies as the lower, the middle and the higher, representing the physiological, the personal and the spiritual. The *Muladhara* and *Swathishtana*, *chakras* constitute the lower group. They are concerned with receiving two forces in the body—the serpent fire from the earth and the vitality from the sun. The next three *chakras*, which form the middle group, are concerned with the lower and the higher astral and the lower mind respectively. The remaining two *chakras*; viz., *Ajna* and *Sahasrara*, are apart from the rest. They are connected with the pituitary body and the pineal gland respectively and they come in action only when man has developed his spiritual qualities.

According to Hindu scriptures the various *chakras* are presided over by different deities. The following message delivered by the spirit of a *yogi* at the Spiritual Healing Centre, at Coimbatore, on 26th March 1944, will be read with considerable interest:

“When the *shakti* in the *Mooladhara* joins the *Ajna* centre it goes by the name of *Raja Yoga*. When the *shakti* in the *Swathishtana* joins the *Anahata* you have what is called *Bhakti Yoga*. When the *shakti* in the *Vishudha* centre joins with the *Sahasrara* you have what is known as *Gnan Yoga*—the supreme spiritual enlightenment of the *yogi*. When the five astral centres are working

harmoniously under the perfect control of the *Ajna* and *Sahasrara* centres the trained *yogi* becomes a *Karmayogi* devoid of desire and passion "

When the *chakras* are activated the fibres of the relative nerve plexuses in the physical body vibrate in unison with them These nerve centres may be compared to radio valves As we have said, the *chakras* are in the invisible bodies viz the astral and mental and when they are activated they send their impulses which are transformed by the brain into thought feeling or action, according to the nature of the impulse received by the brain

Let us explain the serpent fire and its working It is by a long effort of the will that the serpent fire can be awakened and once this is aroused the other *chakras* are also vivified The fire moves in spiral waves like the coils of a serpent and we get consciousness of the other worlds The heat of the fire is excessive and it is most dangerous to trifle with it To awaken the serpent fire i.e., *Kundalini* is a feat of no mean order Only highly spiritually minded people should do it by concentrating their mind on the flame but it is a practice that is full of danger We are told that even such a spiritual giant as Ramakrishna Paramahansa was subject to great burning sensation all over the body when he used to come to consciousness after his *samadhi* It can therefore be well imagined how much greater the danger is for ordinary people with ordinary spiritual development to practise the awakening of the *Kundalini* It would be sheer madness to embark upon such a venture without the aid of a spiritual master If men rush in where angels fear to tread they must bear consequences But God in His great mercy has kept hidden the great powers that are in man If they are developed by persons of bad motives or evil

design, they become an engine of their destruction. Without the moral and physical preparation such as is implied in the first three steps of *Raja Yoga*, no one should venture to awaken the *Kundalini*. The object of *yoga* is not to attain extraordinary powers what are known as *Siddhis*, but spiritual perfection. One should not hanker for miraculous powers and experiences. In fact these come to him naturally, when a man is spiritually fit and the grace of God descends upon him.

There is no doubt a longing in man especially when he is spiritually minded, to unveil the mysteries of God, to see Him face to face and to travel through all the unseen worlds. In the desire to unveil the hidden side of life saints, scholars and scientists have laid down their lives. We are told that Arjuna was fired with the same thought to see God and to perceive the unpereceivable. And he had to repent and ask Shri Krishna to restore him to his original self for without the will of God to wish for, and try to acquire supernormal powers by *yogic* methods, is to invite disaster.

'Let no one therefore waste his life in the pursuit of miraculous powers and experiences. Spiritual powers are not something that can be purchased in return for specific meritorious acts. They cannot be attained as the logical result of practising any particular method or following a certain path. No one can say when and where and under what circumstances one would be worthy of the great illumination. God alone knows when it can be given and to whom it may be given with benefit to the world. Divine powers are not meant for man. He should not crave for mysterious experiences. He need not strive for abnormal powers. They will be given to him without the asking when he is fit for them. They will come out of his own self in the natural course when he is worthy to

exercise them for furthering God's plan " (*Yoga For All* by swami Dharma Theertha, page 111.)

The *Kundalini* is a reservoir of sexual forces. When these are sent up to the brain by the awakening of the serpent fire they become "ojas"—spiritual force. Only that man, who is absolutely pure in heart and mind and has infinite power of resistance against any temptations of the flesh, acquires supernormal powers with the grace of God and becomes a God-man.

Certainly the practice of arousing the *Kundalini* is fraught with grave danger, but it does not mean that it should be dispensed with completely. It may be difficult to get a *guru*, on whom you can implicitly rely to teach you *Raja Yoga*. But if one of the Masters or the great Spirits that guide our world suggests that you are fit to undertake it, you should not hesitate. For a Spirit *guru* is greater than an earth *guru* and he knows how to make use of you for furthering God's plan.

Leadbeater gives his own experience in his book, *Chakras*. He thought that he had no psychical powers and, though he had read and studied a lot, having lived in India for forty-two years, he kept away knowing the danger too well. But one day one of the Masters suggested to him to undertake a certain kind of meditation and the result was marvellous. When the Masters watch and guide and suggest it means that you are treading on a safe path, for they make use of your purity and selflessness for furthering God's design on his earth for its betterment.

We reiterate that the force of *Kundalini* is "a tremendous reality." Its effects are serious. It leads to ruination, physical, moral and spiritual, if man in his egotism or ignorance, seeks supernormal powers without first testing

the foundations, whether he is fit physically, morally and spiritually to become a God's agent in furthering His Plan. But to a true aspirant who has waited in patience his turn to get the light, remembering the words of Christ: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you," when the fire of *Kundalini* is awakened it means his liberation.

A most vital thing in the universe is the procreative or sex energy which is the basic supply of all creation on earth. If this basic energy is utilised for the mere purpose of creation, it is animal passion and man is no better than a brute. But this very energy is capable of being transformed into the sublimest thing in the universe and the great powers of the *yogis* are the result of the conservation of this energy in the human system. By leading a life of renunciation and continence they transform it into a spiritual force for realizing God. As Rishi Ram Ram says in one of his beautiful messages, "Man rises to his full height in the scale of evolution by turning sex energy inward. This is the energy behind the great power of the *yogis*."

When this energy is made inwardly available in full force the soul is energised, vitalised. It becomes a magnetic current, full of health, life and vigour. Such conservation of energy tends to the growth of the spirit in man. And God being Spirit, how can He be realized, except through the forces of the Spirit? One of the greatest lessons of *Raja Yoga* therefore is the necessity of leading a life of continence, as sex energy is capable of the highest transformation. The turning inward is a process of sublimation.

We have dealt with the question of the Psychic *Prana* and its control. The next step is *Pratyahara*. By

Pratyahara we mean controlling the senses by the will. The mind must be strengthened to ignore the senses. The centres which are the organs of perception are to be subdued. These organs or nerve centres, as well as those controlling the autonomic nervous system dealing with the vital internal organs in the body are situated at the back of the brain and the *Tantric* Manuals advise the *yogis* to get them under volitional control. This is a most difficult thing. To stop the mind from joining the organs is easier said than done. It will take a very long time to achieve any result, for mind is like a maddened monkey drunk with wine, which has no control over anything. The desires, the attachment cannot be left off too soon. They require a tremendous will power. Pride, doubt, suspicion, jealousy are the other factors, that disturb the mind and add to the fuel of its restlessness.

After a man has practised *Pratyahara* and gained confidence he can go to the next step. It is *Dharana*. By *Dharana* we mean concentration of the mind, on a certain part of the body, say for example the tip of the nose. This practice of *Dharana* requires seclusion. The mind is much distracted by companionship with all sorts of people. It is not advisable to overwork, for overwork causes mental distraction and the *yogis* find it very hard to bring back the mind to composure and quietness after the day's hard work.

The advantages of *Dharana* are many. It keeps the body in perfect health. It improves the voice. It stimulates energy. It whets the intellect. It enables the mind to see the subtler things in life and brings him nearer to the goal of realization. If a man concentrates his mind on the tip of the nose it is said after some practice, he would begin to smell fragrant odours. If the mind is

concentrated at the root of the tongue he will begin to hear sounds. If the concentration is on the tip of the tongue, he will begin to feel the taste of nice flavours. This should not be doubted, for any one can satisfy himself by practising it.

The seventh limb is *Dhyana*. By *Dhyana* we mean meditation. In meditation we try to forget the world and its happenings. The clamour of desires ceases. When the mind is centred on God it becomes a holy sanctuary. The soul is uplifted. It draws nearer to the origin of the universe, the great Creator, God. As it seeks union with Him "it draws from on High those true qualifications which are its nature—fearlessness, the sense of reality and the sense of deathlessness." The soul is of the substance of truth, of Divinity.

There are various ways of meditation, *viz.*, concentration on the tip of the nose, meditating on the lotus flower, about six inches from the crown of the head. By imagining the centre of the flower as virtue, its stem as knowledge and God as a fibre of the stem great results can be expected. Yet another method is to meditate upon a flame of fire, emanating from the centre of the heart, and imagining it as the flame of your soul, covering some bidden flame which is the Soul of Souls, God. Fire is given a unique place in the religions of the world. It is the very breath of God. It is the highest material conception of Divine Perfection and Unity in nature.

Samadhi, the state of extreme bliss, is the crown of meditation. It is a stage reached when the vibrations of the mind harmonise with the vibrations of the higher planes. They are the higher or the superconscious vibrations. We have discussed and shown in our book, *The Other World*, why a medium can commune

with discarnate spirits. This is because a medium's vibrations correspond with the vibrations of the other planes. The *Samadhi* of the *Rajayogi* corresponds with the trance of the trance medium in Spiritualism. *Raja Yoga* and Spiritualism are identical in their aim viz., to attain evolutionary perfection. But a true *yogi's* ideal is to use his supernormal powers for the liberation of his soul. He achieves these powers through purity and self denial. A spiritualist whether he is a clairvoyant, a clairaudient, a trance medium, auto writer or a psychometrist may not necessarily be a spiritual person in the true sense of the word. He therefore runs far greater danger than his brother *yogi* for spirits of a lower order may interfere and even cause obsession which is a great danger in reances.

The powers which a *yogi* can get by *Samadhi* are tremendous. As he advances the powers he gains become obstacles, if the goal of the *yogi* is the final union with God. These obstacles must be removed by the *yogi* firmly and he should not become a prey to them. These obstacles are powers no doubt. The *yogi* can enter a dead body and make it get up and move. He can enter even a living body. We know the story of Shankaracharya who in order to get knowledge of the world entered the dead body of a king and led a frivolous and sensuous life as kings generally do when they are surrounded with pelf and power. Having gained experience he went back to the lifeless body of his which had been left intact awaiting the return of the soul. The goal of the *yogi* is to get knowledge of the *Purusha*. Nature and soul are two different things. The *yogi* makes *Samsama*. He exercises his mind first on the gross parts and then on the finer states. For example he takes a lump of clay. He meditates on it. From clay the dross he

the distance in less time with a greater supply of coal. Similarly, why shall not the soul, by intensifying its action, attain perfection in this very life? All beings will at last attain to the goal we know. But who cares to wait all these millions of aeons? Why not reach it immediately, in this body, even in this human form? Why shall I not get that infinite knowledge, infinite power now?"

(*Raja Yoga*, page 62)

We should not be misunderstood when we make a plea for the study of yogic methods to accelerate our spiritual progress. The most essential and important part is the development of our moral and religious character. And when this has been attained by the aspirant, and if he feels sure that he would be able to resist all temptations of the flesh, that he would not become a victim to *Ahankara* superiority of notion, he can pursue further and make use of these methods by which he can awaken the inner consciousness—we mean, the super-consciousness to reach the final goal.

To aspire for supernormal powers is not good. The true yogi never invokes God to give him these powers. His prayer is only for light and wisdom. The powers come to him like the dew falling on the earth before sunrise, quite naturally if his goal is spiritual liberation. Yogic exercises accelerate his march to the final goal. But if he seeks supernormal powers to manifest his superiority, if he is swayed by *Ahankara*, it would end in his complete undoing. Perfect purity, faith, humility from the beginning to the end and complete resignation to the will of God—these are a *sine qua non* in the practice of yoga. Truly, as Swami Vivekananda says why should we not aspire for infinite knowledge, infinite power? But we have to be careful and to have full trust in ourselves, that we shall not be shaken in our resolve and shall

retain our humility to the end. For, God manifests Himself to him alone, who is pure in heart and humble as the summer rose that sheds its fragrance in the morning air, hid in the shrubs and in the valleys, far away from shouts and uproar of "the madding crowd."

If a man submits to the pleasures of the senses, it is animal happiness. It is shallow and fleeting. If he is intellectual and yearns for refined and cultural pleasures, it is a middle course. But the most sublime path is that of spiritual contemplation. *Raja Yoga* offers a way to this spiritual happiness. Religion has no meaning unless we realise God. This was experienced by Zoroaster, who speaks of his revelation in the *Gathas*; by the great *Rishis* of India, who have given us the immortal treasure of the *Upanishads*; by Lord Shri Krishna, who has bequeathed to us the heritage of the *Bhagavad Gita*; by Buddha, who has taught us the philosophy of *Nirvana*; by Christ, hailed as the Son of God by Christians, to whom the *Bible* is the most sacred book; and last, but not the least, by Muhammad who is revered in the entire Islamic world for the matchless *Koran*.

Says Swami Vivekananda: "*Samadhi* is the property of every human being—nay, every animal. From the lowest animal to the highest angel, sometime or other, each one will have to come to that state, and then and then alone, will real religion begin for him. Until then we only struggle towards that stage. There is no difference now between us and those who have no religion, because we have no experience. What is concentration good for, save to bring us to this experience? Each one of the steps to attain *Samadhi* has been reasoned out, properly adjusted, scientifically organised and when faithfully practised, will surely lead us to the desired end. Then

will all sorrows cease, all miseries vanish, the seeds for actions will be burned and the soul will be free for ever "
(Raja Yoga page 102)

We may call *Raja Yoga*, Wisdom-Religion, or religion based on science. It opens out a vast vista for the realization of God in a most scientific manner. It is the union of man and God-in man the union of Self with other Selves, for life is one and God permeates throughout the whole universe. **ONENESS WITH GOD** is the root of all being. It is the only vital thought, the only ideal of life, if man wishes to progress and liberate his soul.

We have already said that religion is a matter of personal experience. The various founders of religion had perceived God. They had seen their souls and it was therefore that they were able to spread the message of the Other World with such fervour and enthusiasm. To those who have not seen God or perceived their souls religion is only an empty husk or as Swami Vivekananda puts it in a very apt phrase 'a mental assent to the customs of their forefathers.' It is this wrong attitude which in the past was responsible for the bigotry, which caused fruitless bloodshed and horrors of war. If we recall the memory of the Inquisition in Europe it is the grossest chapter in the world's history. We recoil at the very thought that such terrible horrors should have been perpetrated and all that in the name of God and religion!

The *yoga* system of ancient India can prove to any one who is pure, unselfish and unmindful of the fruits of his actions, that it is not impossible for such a person to perceive God and his soul. It is not a mere question of belief to him. Religion in this sordid world of ours, is

supposed to give us some motive power to do good and to be moral. But can mere words satisfy? The desire for truth is unquenchable. To the challenge "Can I see God?", the *yogin* can truly reply "Yes, you can. Practise *yoga*." The world is immeasurably indebted to the *Rishis* of ancient India who, having perceived God by the practice of *yoga*, have left that priceless treasure to us. It is a heritage of which we should be justly proud.

Raja Yoga is a science like any other science, astronomy, anatomy, chemistry and so forth. We acquire knowledge by observing facts. It is easier to observe facts in external nature and come to our own conclusions. There are however no instruments by which we can gather the internal knowledge of the soul. The only apparatus to do this is our mind. The more we concentrate our attention the more illumined does our mind become. As Swami Vivekananda says "The goal of all its (*Raja Yoga's*) teaching is how to concentrate the mind, then, how to discover the innermost recesses of our own minds then how to generalise their contents and form our own conclusions from them." (*Raja Yoga* page 13)

The external is the grosser part of the internal which is subtler and finer. The man who has knowledge of the internal gets knowledge also of the external, for the cause of the external manifestation is within man himself. He becomes a master of nature's forces. *Raja Yoga* starts from the internal world and succeeds in mastering the external. In the West we know of the witches tied to hay stacks and burnt to death. Joan of Arc a mere peasant girl who dreamed dreams and sought to save her country, succeeded well in her plan though she did not know a word of military strategy or science. But what fate did she meet with? She was burnt as a witch. For the West could not understand that she was a mystic and had

like a problem of Euclid.....Man-spirit proves God-spirit.....When one sees mortal man displaying tremendous capabilities, controlling the forces of nature and opening up to view the world of spirit, the reflective mind is overwhelmed with the conviction that if one man's spiritual Ego can do this much, the capabilities of the Father Spirit must be relatively as much vaster as the whole ocean surpasses the single drop in volume and potency. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*: prove the soul of man by its wondrous powers—you have proved God."

(Vol. 1, Preface, page 12.)

When a man cultures a tree in his own garden, waters it, manures it and attends to it in every way, the tree yields a far better fruit than if it were neglected. The ideal of yoga is to hasten man's spiritual growth. It is to bring out the best in him for the perfection of his soul in one birth, if possible, instead of his having to wait for a cycle of births. Why should he drift like a log of wood in the river of life if by learning the art of swimming he can go over to the other bank?

As there are villagers in India who have not still seen a railway train and there are savages in South Africa who have never seen and will never believe that water can freeze, there are people still in the world, even among the highly educated, who in spite of the rapid progress made by Modern Spiritualism refuse to believe in the existence of powers, beyond those of the physical senses. What wonderful powers can be evolved if the body, which is an objectified or crystallized thought, is made an instrument of the spirit and can be put off whenever desired, can only be understood from the students of occult science, who have made experiments and realized psychic and occult truths.

If a child were introduced into a factory, where huge machines are roaring at tremendous speed, flashing light and creating deafening sounds, it would not only be confused and confounded but it would become senseless with fright. *Raja Yoga* is not meant for any one, except under the guidance of an adept in spiritual knowledge who has mastered the laws of God and has attained spiritual perfection. If any one else attempts it he will meet with a tragic fate. The fact that such *yogins* can still be found in India, living on the mountains or in forests or crowded cities, unknown to the busy, giddy world, speaks highly of the spiritual culture of this great country. And it is only in the company and under the direct supervision of such a *yogin* that *Raja Yoga* practice should be undertaken by the aspirant. The *guru* must know his *shishya* and the latter must know the former thoroughly well before this type of *yoga* is undertaken.

In *The Last Message of Shri Krishna* a beautiful story is narrated of a miser whose only purpose in life was to hoard money and work incessantly for wealth, without giving any thought to his own personal comfort or to the comfort and happiness of his wife and children and those dependent upon him. He denied himself everything to satisfy his greed for money. He had no time to do any good action. He never spoke a kind word. He led a loveless life, for who could love him who had no love for others? Such was his frenzy for dross gold! Such was his mad infatuation for wealth and possessions!

It so happened that, like a terrific gale that blows off everything his hoarded piles of wealth disappeared. Misfortunes came upon him. His possessions dwindled and he was left a penniless beggar in the street. Deserted by every one, even by his wife and children, a new light began to dawn on him. His voice was choked with

repentance He cried out to God He saw with bitterness what fruitful years of manhood he had wasted in hoarding that which had no intrinsic value, being impermanent in nature He saw with the eyes of the soul that God alone was permanent, real, and he at once resolved in the bitterness of that moment to dedicate his life to attain union with that Reality He took to meditation If Khatvanga, the king, could get liberation in the space of twenty four minutes that were spared to him before he breathed his last, would not the remaining years of his life be sufficient to earn him liberation of the soul? He became a *sanyasin* and resolved to throw off all egoism and practise asceticism His mind was devotedly fixed on God and God only

This "shabby-looking monk" became the target of attack by many, especially the street urchins Had they not known him as a wicked miser who had spent all his life in hoarding money and now in the eventide of his life was pretending to be holy—a hypocrite in sackcloth and ashes? Poor man indignities were heaped upon him. He was pelted with stones mocked and ridiculed When he prayed mischievous boys pulled him in all directions and spat on him Some took away his tattered clothes Some stole his rosary of beads The poor man was harassed in every way But such was his firm resolve that he maintained an extraordinary control and serenity of mind He was absolutely indifferent to all that happened He bore all the taunts and insults quite silently and patiently, controlling his mind all the time, for he knew that

"Neither is this body the cause of my pleasure and pain nor the *Atman*, nor the gods, nor the planets nor work, nor Time The only cause of pleasure and pain, the *Shrutis* declare, is the mind,

which sets in motion this cycle of transmigration ”
(The Last Message of Shri Krishna, page 281)

He who subdues the mind gains the secret of the universe. “The control of the mind is the highest yoga.”

Raja Yoga aims at the spiritualizing of man for God-realization. We, with our earthly eyes, cannot see Him at whose feet prostrate all creatures. He is Boundless in power, Measureless in strength. But we can see Him with *yogic* eyes. For, is it not said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, “But verily thou art not able to behold Me with these thine eyes, the divine eyes, I (therefore) give unto thee. Behold My sovereign *Yoga!* ” (XI, 8)

When a man wants God and only God, when he is not satisfied with any thing but God, when his whole mind and soul are engrossed day and night in the thoughts of God, in the love of God, in His beauty, His omnipotence, he becomes a true *yogi*. Whether he is a *Karmayogi*, a *Bhakta*, a *Gnanayogi* or a *Rajayogi*, the principal factor in the practice of *yoga* is devotion to God. Union with the Divine Spirit is the *yogi's* goal.

This union becomes a *fait accompli* when, by the methods of *Raja Yoga* in particular, we begin to feel that the whole universe is our home, that every part and parcel of it is akin to us. When we get the consciousness and perception of the Oneness of Matter, Energy and Mind, we feel the Reality as the ONE pervading Spirit that manifests itself in various forms and which is within us and around us.

CHAPTER V

RENUNCIATION

The most important thing in the quest of God is mental equilibrium, perfect control of the mind. Prof Radhakrishnan says, 'The mind is to be resolutely shut against all impressions from outside.' It is very difficult for a man to live in a conflicting environment of divergent views and interests and yet be not influenced or affected by the reaction which such contacts must produce. If a man so conducts himself as not to be affected by outside influences and impressions his work a-day life even in the midst of society is not a hindrance to his spiritual growth or liberation. If he works for the sake of work if he practises virtue for the sake of virtue if he does his duty for the sake of duty his complete disinterestedness becomes his defence against evil. He develops the capacity to retire in the monastic cell of his own heart 'whenever he pleases'.

Christ said 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven' (Sermon on the Mount *St Mathew*, V). Who are the poor in spirit? Those who acquire utter simplicity and guilelessness of a child. Jesus always considered that a child was the fittest person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Verily I say unto you except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

'Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Humility is the foundation-stone of renunciation. How does this humility come? When the heart yearns to spurn all idle desires and seeks mental equilibrium by self-conquest. In fact, self-conquest is God-consciousness. A child-mind is an innocent mind. But as it advances in years, its sense organs develop, its desires increase, its ego becomes restless. Unless desires and the ego are suppressed and annihilated, no God-realization through self-realization can be achieved.

Renunciation truly means conquest of desires and attachments together with continuous concentration on the unity of all life and perfect mental control. The question that arises is whether this can be attained by external or internal renunciation.

External renunciation is a help to internal renunciation. Mere external renunciation without internal renunciation is useless. And *vice versa* it is a question whether internal renunciation without external renunciation is possible of achievement.

We have in this country of India a vast army of *sadhus* and *fakirs* who roam about in the streets and forests, clothed in the orange-coloured robes and covered with ashes, whose only business in life is to carry their begging-bowls to every home and quarter and live idly on the food so doled out to them by the so-called religious-minded public. Mere orange-coloured robes, matted hair, ashes and deer skin do not constitute a *sadhu*. They are symbols, no doubt, but the majority of the *sadhus* wearing these are really hare-brained religious ascetics, who have not the least notion of religion and who wander about aimlessly here and there. They are a great drain upon the poor resources of the country. The *Gita* calls them *vimudhatma*—"false pietists of bewildered soul."

A certain king went to a sage and asked him to show him the way to salvation. The sage replied, *Sarva sanga-parityagam* "absolute renunciation." The king put him no further question. He repaired to his royal palace and abdicated his throne. He left his wife and children and went into a forest. He lived there alone in a lowly hut. But he was not the wiser. He again repaired to the sage, who gave him the same reply to his question. The king began to think that he had not renounced completely. He burnt his hut and began to live in the open fields. He was still not wiser. He went to the sage for the third time and the reply vouchsafed was again the same. The poor man was quite confounded. What is it that he had not renounced? He had given up his royal throne and palace. He had abandoned his wife and children. He had even burnt the lowly hut; he had built for himself in the wilderness. He had barely a loin-cloth on his body. What more sacrifice was wanted of him? The thought suddenly flashed on him that he must give up his body. He was on the point of throwing himself from the summit of a rock when the sage, beholding the foolish man, stopped him from his mad design. 'If you give up your body God will send you in another body. Your salvation is still remote from you for you have not conquered your mind completely. True renunciation is not the giving up of your body but detaching your mind completely.' The quondam king came to his senses.

The mental or inner renunciation is the objective, not the outward or physical renunciation. Hinduism lays a great stress on asceticism as a means of God realization. Zoroastrianism offers salvation through the means of active duty. The word used in the *Avesta* is *Kshathram* which, truly speaking represents the Hindu teaching of *Vairagya* but *Vairagya* not as understood by the

layman in the sense of leaving the world and living in the forest *Kshathram* is the teaching of self-control. It is the basis of conscience. Morality begins in self-restraint and self-denial. And Zoroastrianism, especially in its teachings in the *Gathas*, lays stress upon the true objective of life *viz*, leading a life of the highest morality, which lies in the discharge of all the manifold duties, service to mankind, perfect self-restraint in all pleasures and self-denial. There are two ideals specially involved in the word *Kshathram*, as given to us in the *Gathas*. In its passive aspect it means resignation to the will of God. "Thy will be done!" Or, as the *Gatha* says (29 4), 'Let it be to us as He desires it to be.' The militant aspect is when man, instead of mere submission, determines to pave his way against all odds. For he says, "Is not my life a dedicated one? Why shall I not struggle and carry on the strife till I succeed in overcoming all difficulties?" The true Zoroastrian has no defeatist's mentality. He must fight and be triumphant. He welcomes pain and suffering. He knows that he shall be the ultimate victor, for has he not sided Truth? *Ahura Mazda* must therefore befriend him, take him to His bosom.

'Give me pain ever so much, in it I shall find nothing but bliss, through the strength of *Kshathram*, which is the blessing of the Conscience.'

(*Gatha* 33, 13)

Complete indifference to pleasure and pain, and not actual renunciation of all pleasures, is the teaching of Zoroaster. It is true that Zoroastrianism does not commend asceticism which entails celibacy and seclusion from worldly affairs. But it will not be denied that the Zoroastrian ideal is as high as the Hindu ideal of renunciation. In fact, in essence, they are identical, *viz*, in

the spirit of detachment and nonchalance to all pleasures and pains.

There is no doubt that the mental or inner renunciation is absolutely necessary in God-realization. Mere knowledge of the phenomenal world creates attachment and this cannot lead us to divine wisdom. The universe is an aggregation of *vrittis*. To reduce the number of these *vrittis* is the objective of life, because by so disciplining the mind God-realization can be achieved.

The fundamental point then is to reduce the *vrittis*, one by one, till the "*vritti* relating to God alone remains in the mind," as Swami Ananda teaches in his beautiful book, *Spiritual Practice*.

Meditation is a most important factor in God-realization. The mind has to be killed in order to achieve union with God. National service, love and piety are indeed high intellectual ideals. They are necessary for a very large majority of us all. They are the means to spiritual growth and life. But when a man reaches the ultimate stage, when he can feel God, they become non-essentials. For, God is the only Reality and "he must forget all except God." In fact, by remembering God all the time we remember everyone and feel oneness with life.

Truly speaking, external renunciation also is as necessary as internal renunciation. A true *Sanyasin* has a better opportunity to realize God than one who has to move constantly in the *maya* of the world. The latter has a greater struggle to face. His mind is attacked from all sides. He is compelled to make distinctions. It is difficult for a householder, for instance, to practise universal love and charity, when the claims of his wife and children and those of the near relations force him to be

lop-sided in his affections and duties. Because it is so difficult, some consider *samsar* as the highest *yoga* and greater than *sanyas*.

The ascetic system, in vogue in India of *sadhus* renouncing the world is the one that gives to this country a mystic charm which is all its own. The spirituality of such a life of complete renunciation should commend itself to all those who seek God realization. And in the vast army of the religious mendicants in India would be found a few, who take to the ochre robe and the begging-bowl, out of honest convictions, fired with the one notion of realising the Reality. All honour to those heroic souls, who abandon life's ways and prepare themselves for the rigours of a higher life through the path of asceticism. Many a learned *sadhu* could be met in the snow capped mountain forests of the Himalayas. Paul Brunton gives a beautiful description of his learned hermit friends in the Tibetan mountains and the valleys of Kashmir, aspiring for the presence of the Divine Spirit. We shall not discuss the question whether a life of solitude is preferable to a life of ceaseless, philanthropic activity. But it will not be denied that just as an artist hungers for solitude to develop his love for art which requires 'spiritual, artistic and physical isolation' in the same way, 'when a man hopes to make a supreme endeavour to spiritualize himself he must go away and shut himself up, too.'

(*A Hermit in the Himalayas*, page 13)

Who would not show reverence to those who take to the monastery or hermitage, either in the forest or on the crown of a hill, who make chastity as their lifelong friend and lead a life of asceticism in the truest sense of the word, simple, sincere, ready to sacrifice their all in all, with their mind completely subjugated by active meditation and concentration? But what is the number of such

sadhus in India? How many of them practise *yoga*, in the true sense of the word? It may be said that hardly five percent of the saffron fraternity understand and practise meditation for the subjugation of the mind to attain God-realization. Our remarks are therefore not against the system of religious asceticism in India, but against those who profess to be ascetics, who have not the sincerity or knowledge, so necessary for the aspirants in the path.

GOOD-BYE!

"Good-bye, proud world! I 'm going home;
Thou art not my friend, and I 'm not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine,
Long I 've been tossed like the driven foam;
But now, proud world! I 'm going home.

Good-bye to flattery's fawning face;
To grandeur with his wise grimace;
To upstart wealth's averted eye;
To supple office, low and high;
To crowded halls, to court and street;
To frozen hearts and hastening feet;
To those who go, and those who come;
Good-bye, proud world! I 'm going home.

I am going to my own hearth-stone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day.
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O when I am safe in my sylvan home,
 I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome,
 And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
 Where the evening star so holy shines,
 I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
 At the sophist schools and the learned clan,
 For what are they all in their high conceit,
 When man in the bush with God may meet."

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

There is a lot of thick common sense in the way Swami Vivekananda elucidates his views on renunciation. He says in his *Karma Yoga* that non resistance is really the highest ideal. But before it can be reached it is necessary to fight evil. Man must work and fight and resist evil. He must strike straight from the shoulder. When he gains the power to resist evil, non-resistance will become a virtue. Generally, the feeling of renunciation comes after the man has plunged into the vortex of life and seen its bright and seamy sides. When desires are satisfied, he sees the futility of running after things of fleeting joy and the longing for God, who is the only Reality, takes root in his heart.

Swami Vivekananda relates a story. A king enquired, "Who is the greater man—he who gives up the world and becomes a *sanyasin* or he who lives in the world and performs his duties as a householder?" The following reply was given to him by his minister, "Each, oh, king, is equally great in his place." But the king was not satisfied with this reply. He wanted to have a proof and his minister took him out of the city. They repaired to a place where there was a big *jalsa*. The princess was to be married and several young men had gathered there to win the hand of the beautiful damsel. The princess threw her glance on all of them but her choice fell upon a hand-

some *sanyasin* who was passing on the way. She ran and threw her garland on the neck of this modest man. The choice being made, it was declared that the *sanyasin*, according to the royal custom, should marry the princess and get half the kingdom. But the *sanyasin* refused point blank. The beauty of the princess, her longing eyes, her pure lips, her burning love made no impression upon him. He said, "I am a *sanyasin*; what nonsense, how can I marry?" He ran away from the place, followed by the princess who had become mad in her love for the man of the forest. But the *sanyasin* soon disappeared in the thick of the jungle and the princess was left behind weeping and sorrowing. The king and his minister, who were watching the scene, met her and consoled her. It was a question of spending the night in the forest. They took shelter under a tree. A he-bird and a she-bird lived together with their young ones. When they saw the party lighting a fire, but very hungry and cold, they resolved to sacrifice their lives. One bird fell and then the other and then the rest into the fire, to provide them with food for the night. The king was dazed at this sacrifice. Then the minister said to the king, "You have seen that each is great in his own place. If you want to live in the world, live like these birds, ready at any moment to sacrifice yourself for others. If you want to renounce the world, be like the young man, to whom the most beautiful woman and a kingdom were as nothing. If you want to be a householder, hold your life as a sacrifice for the welfare of others; and if you choose the life of renunciation, do not ever look at beauty and money and power. Each is great in his own place, but the duty of the one is not the duty of the other."

One of the reasons why external renunciation is so very necessary to complete the work of internal renunciation, is that however much we may congratulate ourselves

that we have conquered or dismissed our desires, they still lurk in the sub-conscious mind. In order to frustrate them and conquer them completely, outward renunciation is necessary.

Extreme asceticism, as mostly practised in ancient India, involving incalculable pain and physical suffering, is not true renunciation. Buddha practised it for seven long years and was not an inch nearer to the solution of life's problem. He was so worn out and exhausted by a life of continuous *tāpas* that he was reduced to a state of living death. Even today some ascetics would be found in India who torture their bodies. Raising the arm and holding it up till it withers, piercing the nails in the flesh till they actually grow in the flesh, staring at the sun, doubling the body—these are some of the features of the extreme type of Indian asceticism still in vogue. Asceticism which ruins bodily health has no value. In fact, it is unspiritual. As Shri Aurobindo says, "Asceticism for its own sake is not the ideal of yoga." (*Basis of Yoga*, page 152.) The ascetics torture the body in the hope and belief that the body, being a useless cover for the soul, must be trampled upon to liberate the soul. This ideal of trampling the body is false. The body is the temple of the soul and not its prison-house. The healthier and cleaner the body, the better for the soul to dart its rays of refugence.

We cannot certainly encourage the idea of such severe austerities as ruin the body. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* the austerities practised for ostentation or 'under a deluded understanding with self-torture', are denounced. But we should not be harsh in our judgment on the ascetics who torture their bodies. They demonstrate a most remarkable type of will-power. Mrs. Annie Besant says in her book, *Yoga*: "First of all they have this value that

in an age like our own they are constant and standing witnesses to the strength of the inner aspiration, which overcomes all bodily passion and all physical temptation in order to seek after something, which is recognised as greater than the physical life. It is not fair to omit from sight in judging these cases that service which they do to humanity."

The idea of renunciation is absolute freedom. It is difficult for a house-holder with many ties of affection to rise above the attachment of *maya*. Greater glory is his who lives in the world, but is not attached to it. He is a greater *sanyasin*, no doubt. But in the majority of cases without external renunciation it is difficult to conquer the senses. It requires tremendous mental resistance. The safest course then is to keep away from worldly attractions. Buddha devised the monastic system for those who aspired for the higher life. Seclusion is the best means of "rapid progress in spiritual life." Perfect self-control and self-denial are qualities of the mind, which are easily developed in an atmosphere free from the attraction of sense objects.

The author of *Spiritual Practice* says, "The true import of renunciation can never be felt until it has actually taken place. No effort of imagination can bring its significance to one, who is still in the world, married or unmarried. A new world is revealed when the Rubicon has been crossed. That world is known only to the man who has renounced." (Page 92.)

Buddha places a great importance on intellectual culture in his scheme of renunciation. By the annihilation of the mind sovereign power can be achieved. But it is too preposterous to think that Buddha identified annihilation of the mind with mental death. Mental

death signifies ignorance and knowledge and ignorance are poles apart. What he aimed at was to gain sovereign power by curbing the mind through the gates of real knowledge. Culture, intellectual companionship and discourses, oratory, eloquence, inspirational talks—these form the food of the aspirant for spiritual life. Ignorance — is man's worst enemy. How can there be salvation without knowledge? It is knowledge that teaches us the vanity of all human wishes, the uselessness of earthly possessions. It is knowledge that opens to us the gate to the wider vision of life. It is knowledge that gives us the key to overcome the law of birth, disease, decay and death.

Buddha should be held as a master-artist who worked the theory of renunciation to perfection. Look at his sacrifices! He left the royal palace, his beautiful wife and child, for what? To seek a solution to life's problem. Why should there be so much of human suffering? Can the law of cause and effect be broken? His penances, his asceticism, which once brought him to the brink of death gave him no true enlightenment. But when he started meditation he put himself on the right track. He saw that life was nothing but a series of becomings and extinctions. So long as the human mind remained attached to the outer world, the wheel of birth and death must continue with its endless chain of pain and suffering. The only way out of it was by renouncing the world. Good thoughts, good words, good deeds, love, piety, charity, abandonment of desires—these were the means of destroying the fruit of past *karma* and attaining *nirvana*.

There is very little of metaphysics in Buddhism. Buddha's philosophy contains logic, psychology and ethics. It is criticised as being pessimistic. Buddhism

enjoins upon every man and woman to make renunciation. But the end of renunciation is to reach *nirvana*, liberation. Is this not bias of the highest type? Buddhism is not pessimism. In fact, it is the most optimistic teaching, as it shows the way to eternal peace and rest or, to speak in the words of A. P. Sinnet, "a sublime state of conscious rest in omniscience." It emphasises that man must work out his own salvation by his own individual effort. When Buddha laid the foundation of his monastic order, he gave the following instructions to his beloved disciples: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves; be a refuge to yourselves; betake yourselves to no external refuge; hold fast to the truth as a lamp; hold fast as a refuge to the truth, look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves."

Buddha preached the Middle Path. We have to put down not all desires but wrong desires. "I preach asceticism inasmuch as I preach the burning away of all the conditions of the heart that are evil." He refined asceticism. He distinguished between true and false asceticism. Centuries after Zoroaster, he doubtless was the best and noblest exponent of the philosophy of true renunciation which he himself practised to perfection.

The greatest sacrifice which Buddha made was when he is said "to have foregone *nirvana*, in order to submit to renewed incarnations for the good of humanity." Was a greater sacrifice, a greater renunciation ever made in the history of mankind? Christ suffered but his suffering ended with his death. Buddha got *nirvana*, after a terrible round of sufferings and yet he was prepared to go through that round of sufferings for a number of years to teach the people, that there was salvation only through renunciation and individual will. Buddha's doctrine of

nirvana closely resembles Plato's belief in a beatific condition, an eternal contemplation upon truth, goodness and beauty

Many questions assail us What is spirituality? What is God? What is Eternity? What is the aim and end of our life? Can there be everlasting peace? These questions are solved only when we realize the nature of the ultimate Reality, the Absolute Consciousness Even human love is a delusion We have to transcend it We must not be carried away by the belief that we are fellow-workers of God and the prosperity and goodness of the world depend upon our efforts God does His work in a most wonderful manner and our duty is to think of Him and Him alone whether awake or asleep and sacrifice all our actions to Him He is the source and fountain of all spirituality and in order to accelerate our spiritual progress we must seek Him above every thing To serve Him and Him alone through all the walks of life without attachment to anything is true renunciation

It is said about the *Chataka* bird that it slakes its thirst only out of the rain drops and would not drink from the plentiful waters of the rivers or the lakes Our thirst for the Infinite should be like that of the bird, *Chataka* This intense desire for God comes to us only when we realize the emptiness and vanity of human wishes

Spirituality and occultism are not necessarily identical But it cannot be denied that occultism very often leads to spirituality When a man becomes illuminated he is called a *Mahatma* or an *Arhat* The *Arhats* or *Mahatmas* are said to be endowed with supernormal powers The world knows very little of them They form the highest order of Spiritual Brotherhood on earth,

Shams-ul ulema Dustoor Dr. M. N. Dhalla, the High Priest of the Parsis, author of *Our Perfecting World*, has contributed a very learned chapter on the question of evil. He says, "In God's world of goodness, evil is a stubborn fact *Zarathustra* does not palliate evil. It exists just as good exists." According to Zoroastrian teaching, man's highest duty is to fight evil. The world is a battle field and God wants every man to be a soldier in the fight, the eternal fight against evil. Evil is man's most aggressive, pitiless foe. If it was not fought tooth and nail, it would "thrattle passive good to death."

This idea of struggle and fighting is so persisting in Zoroastrian teaching that it induced a materialistic thinker like Nietzsche to propound the theory of the Superman dominating the world. Nietzsche claimed that his theory had the sanction of *Zarathustra*. He called his book *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Zoroaster's ideal man was one who fought evil to make the world safer, happier, better and more prosperous. His goal was to evolve a race of righteous men and women through a life of heroic virtues. Nietzsche distorted this teaching by claiming that the salvation of the world lay in creating a malfristed race of supermen extirpating the weak and the feeble.

Christ's teaching "Do not resist", is not a mere "passive exhortation." More persons are saved from moral ruination by a timely word of love and kindness. The law of punishment, though infallible from the point of view of state legislation, very often makes a mess of human values. Victor Hugo shows in his book, *Les Miserables*, how the whole career of Jean Valjean was changed by the loving kindness of the Bishop. To return good for evil to redeem the wicked by active good, to face the aggressor with a loving smile, to meet hatred

with love, and arrogance by meekness—this is Buddha's way. This is what Christ taught and preached. This is the philosophy of the Stoics. This is the teaching of Lao tze.

India well claims to be the founder of the ascetic ideal. This ideal of asceticism had influence upon the Greek philosophers in the 5th century B. C. Socrates advocated that man's happiness was only in the practice of virtue and not in the satisfaction of desires. The Cynics decried wealth fame and other good things of life. Epicurus taught that man should be master of himself and not be a slave to the attractions of the outside world. The Eastern idea of the monastic austerities entered the West and for a long time monasteries and nunneries flourished in the West. They are now fast disappearing. It is only the East that still holds high the flag of monastic life.

Renunciation is criticised as a negative philosophy of life. Dustoor Dr. M. N. Dhalla says 'Retreat before evil is the defeatist and negative philosophy of life. The seekers of the inner calm by a life of renunciation, meditation and austerities claim that by utterly dominating the self and making the body a passive agent of the will, they obtain illumination and power transcending the understanding possessed by mortals. However, the sages who are supposed to have reached their ideal and attained the supernormal power are not known to have done any practical good to the world, so far as history records. On the other hand, the apostles of science and learning, discovery and invention, adventures and exploration, healing and humanitarian service, who have lived the life of self expression, toiled for the world and suffered for the world, have bettered the world and benefitted humanity. The spiritual joy and supreme

satisfaction of having done their duty to mankind, which these noble souls must have enjoyed, is no less worthy and no less intense than the experiences credited to the practice of ascetic austerities.

"The individual, who chooses renunciation as the way of life, seeks his own safety and abandons the world to its fate. It is the intense love of the self and the undue anxiety of losing it in the midst of earthly attachments, that impel him to quit home and hearth. The man of ascetic inclination gives up the passing things for what he thinks the permanent prize for himself. He is aware of the "I" alone and the salvation of this "I" is the only object of his life. If he sorrows or suffers, it is always for "I." For him others do not exist. He does not sorrow for his suffering fellow-beings, nor sheds tears for them because that is not his concern. He and his God are the only two existences. Yet, as long as there are two separate entities his salvation is not attained. All his penances, meditations and trances are therefore made with a view to make him oblivious of his own existence. As long as he feels and knows that he exists, he is far from achieving his object. He is saved only when he succeeds in drowning himself in the waters of self-effacement—*nirvana*. But this salvation of the self is, at best, selfish. The piety that he has cultivated is a negative virtue. If the world is evil and life is a curse, as he alleges, he has secured his own safety by fleeing from the world and taking refuge in solitude where the evil of the world cannot reach him. But he has not made the world safe against evil. He has not worked for the regeneration of the imperfect world. He has not accepted the challenge of evil in the world, but has fled before it for saving his soul. Not living for the world, he has as well not lived in the

world. He is dead to the world before he dies his bodily death in solitude."

(*Our Perfecting World*, pages 31 & 32)

The main objection to renunciation, as will be seen from the above remarks of the learned author, is that the individual who seeks renunciation does no good to any one. His renunciation is for the good of his own soul. This is not wholly correct. A man of true renunciation is a great asset. He is a beacon-light to be righted humanity. He attains spiritual insight and powers, which he uses for the good of all mankind, though the good that he does by his silent thought may not be visible to the naked eye. We know what a tremendous influence Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa wielded upon those who came into contact with him.

The man of renunciation leads a larger life, for he lives in God. It is wrong to say that he has sought his own salvation. Such a life of dedication is an indicator of what is possible of achievement by man in spirituality and that in itself is the greatest contribution to the world's progress.

India is often run down for the poverty of her scientific discoveries and this is attributed to the teaching of asceticism in her religion. But it should be remembered that a nation's greatness lies not in its geographical bounds, its mineral wealth, its materialistic grandeur, its railways, its airways, its wireless system, its buildings, its palaces and its halls. It lies in its sages, its saints and its philosophers. And India to-day, though the poorest country in the world, has the richest treasure in the philosophy that she has inherited from the ancient past.

Rabindranath Tagore, in his foreword to that monumental work, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, gives the

saviours of the world, the blossom and the glory of their Race Re-incarnation builds up the perfect septenary being and his individual triumph subserves the redemption of Humanity as a whole."

CHAPTER VI

RE-INCARNATION

RE INCARNATION is a theory, not a scientifically proven fact, but it is a very convincing theory It is based upon the postulates of spiritual philosophy (1) that God is immanent in everything (2) that Evolution is the method of "His Immanence", (3) that Free Will is the most potent motive force in the evolution of man (4) that the Universe is made of different planes of matter and (5) that all the planes of matter are to be found in the different bodies of man

What we mean by re incarnation is the repeated entering of some thing that is permanent into an impermanent abode or covering The word used in Greek literature is *metempsychosis* It suggests the transit of the soul or *psyche* Stress is laid upon the transit of the soul or *psyche* and not upon its habitation in the physical body If we therefore combine as Mrs Annie Besant says, the two ideas contained in the words re incarnation and *metempsychosis* we get a comprehensive picture of what

we mean by the commonly known theory of re-incarnation or re-birth. In fact, re-incarnation is a very simple doctrine, which suggests the indestructibility of the soul and its entrance into this life with the experiences of the past lives for the further growth and transformation of the soul.

"As billows on the undulating main
That swelling fall and falling swell again,
So on the tide of time incessant roll
The dying body and the deathless soul."

There are inequalities in life. One man is born in a palace. The other is born in a hovel. One inherits a strong robust body free from disease. He lives a vigorous round of healthy life. The other is a victim of a sickening disease and pines away in pain and suffering. The spendthrift son of a millionaire father spends his life in giddy pleasures and the world still applauds the fool. On the other hand the street urchin, ill clothed and half-starved makes his way through the dark alleys of life unnoticed and uncared for.

How are we to justify these apparent inequalities? They cannot be attributed to the whims and caprices of a fantastic God. For, as we know, God is just. There is no favouritism in the universe. The secret of God's work is the law of evolution, the law of cause and effect. Material evolution is a fact. Why should we consider spiritual evolution as improbable? There is the Divine Law of Cause and Effect in operation from millions of ages in the past. Man alone is responsible for his own happiness or misery. The qualities he possesses, physical, mental or spiritual are the result of the use made by him of the opportunities he had in the past. He inherits the past and is therefore responsible for his deeds or misdeeds. If good

opportunities are unwantonly wasted in one life, bitter fruits have to be tasted in the next. For, that is the inexorable law of cause and effect. As you sow, so must you reap—is the chief Buddhist teaching. Among the impermanent things the human spirit alone is permanent. Re incarnation is the only metaphysical explanation in conformity with our reasoning that solves the knotty problem of the inequalities of life.

Historical Survey of the Theory of Re-incarnation

According to Herodotus the teaching of re incarnation originated in Egypt. He says, "The Egyptians are the first who propounded the theory that the human soul is imperishable and that when the body of any one dies, it enters into some other creature that may be ready to receive it, and that when it has gone the round of all created forms on land in water and in air, it once more enters a human body born for it and that this cycle of existence for the soul takes in three thousand years."

According to the Egyptian notion of religion the human race started on the earth when after the departure of the gods and pure spirits human bodies were created for demons to inhabit. The idea was that sin should be expiated and that the fallen spirits, namely, men and women, by their earthly course of life, should go through a period of purification. If the soul that returns is judged to be still not purified it is sent back to earth 'in renewal of its expiation either in the body of a man or animal or plant.'

Mrs Annie Besant says. In India as in Egypt, Re incarnation was at the root of ethics. When Arjuna fears to enter the war arena lest he should have to slay his own kinsmen and friends and thus become a murderer,

Krishna holds out to him the teaching of re-incarnation that human bodies do not matter. They are perishable. It is the soul that lives in the body and shifts its habitation from time to time, that alone is immortal and not the fleshy covering in which it is clothed.

'These bodies of the embodied One who is eternal, indestructible and immeasurable, are known as finite. Therefore fight, O Bharata.

"He who regardeth this (the dweller in the body) as a slayer, and he who thinketh he is slain, both of them are ignorant. He slayeth not, nor is he slain.

"He is not born, nor doth he die nor having been, ceaseth he any more to be unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient he is not slain when the body is slaughtered.

"Who knoweth him indestructible, perpetual, unborn, undiminishing, how can that man slay, O Partha, or cause to be slain?

"As a man casting off worn-out garments, taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body casting off worn out bodies, entereth into others that are new.

'Weapons cleave him not nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away.

'Uncleavable he, incombustible he and indeed neither to be wetted nor dried away perpetual, all pervasive stable, immovable ancient.

Unmanifest unthinkable immutable he is called therefore, knowing him as such thou shouldst not grieve.

- (*Bhagavad-Gita*, Discourse II, 18-25)

It is foolish to think that eternal happiness or misery is man's reward or punishment for actions in one birth alone. For, one earthly round of three score years and ten is too short a period for human perfection. Many births are required to rise to the level of spiritual excellence. Imperfections have to be eliminated one by one and they require time. Spiritual growth is a matter of evolution.

It is generally believed that there is no direct reference to re-incarnation in Zoroastrian scriptures but there is a mention of it in the *Gathas* which form the most authentic part of the scriptures of the Parsis, being Lord Zoroaster's own composition. Most of the valuable Avestic books on Zoroastrianism are as we know, lost. It is therefore conceivable that a detailed exposition of such an important teaching as of re-incarnation is not traced in the other extant Avestic books though in later Pehlavi literature which is supposed to be based upon this lost Avestan literature the position again is different. The *Gathas* alone fortunately escaped the vandalism of the Greeks and the Arabs when they ransacked or burned the rich libraries of the Iranians.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* Shri Krishna says, 'The worlds beginning from the top with the world of *Brahma*, they come and go (have re birth) O Arjuna but he who cometh unto Me O Kaunteya he knoweth birth no more'. The same teaching is visible in the Zoroastrian *Gathas*. Hormuzd is considered to be just and perfect and the goal of man's life is to reach *Ahura Mazda's* perfection. How can this be achieved without a myriad of births? God has created the indestructible law of cause and effect good and evil happiness and suffering. But is one birth sufficient for the immortal soul to gain all the experiences of physical life?

It is said that man has reached only the second-stage, out of the five stages of Life Eternal planned by God. There is reference about this in the five *Gahs* mentioned in the Parsi scriptures. If so, it is obvious that the soul has lived and has to live aeons and aeons of lives, gather infinite experiences before it can finally be merged into the Divine Spirit.

Re-incarnation plays an important part in the teachings of Buddha. In fact, it forms the fabric and substance of the whole Buddhistic teachings and philosophy. We have already dealt with it in our chapter on Buddhism.

Greek philosophy, in 5th Century B. C. was chiefly affected by the ancient teachings of the East. It is therefore not surprising that the doctrine of re-incarnation is traced in the teachings of the Greek philosophers. It is said about Pythagoras that he visited Egypt and India before Alexander the Great conquered the latter country. And the result of his visit was that he included the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul in his teachings to his followers in Greece. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by Dryden, contains the following passage, which is the outcome of Pythagorean teachings:

"Souls cannot die. They leave a former home,
And in new bodies dwell, and from them roam.
Nothing can perish, all things change below,
For spirits through all forms may come and go,
Good beasts shall rise to human forms, and men,
If bad, shall backward turn to beasts again.
Thus, through a thousand shapes, the soul shall go
And thus fulfil its destiny below."

Just as a bird builds a nest, relying upon its instinct, using "incredible skill", so also the "unwitting soul

blindly frames the fabric of its body in keeping with the laws of its own adaptation " This thought finds an echo in Plato's philosophy He says, "The soul always weaves her garment anew " It means that one birth is not enough for the soul to gain complete experiences of life. ' If it takes ages of time and thousands of lives to form one kind of animal from another, the expansion of human soul from the lower to the higher natures surely needs many and many a life for the growth " The very nature of the soul, which is immortal, should require a series of births and deaths, disembodiments and re embodiment for its absolute purification and perfection

Speaking of the Jewish religion, in the third chapter of *Genesis* in the Old Testament, we are told how Adam and Eve committed the sin of eating the forbidden fruit and there is a common conception that we men of earth suffer because of this original sin Of course, this is only symbolic What is meant by it is that we have to suffer before we can reach a state of complete purification, which is only possible by a continuous range of births and re births Jewish scholars were greatly influenced by Grecian thought and we find ample evidence of their belief in re incarnation in their literature Philo, who lived in the time of Christ was a Jewish scholar He held Plato as his guru and he follows the latter particularly in regard to the teaching of the soul's *metempsychosis* We get a glimpse of the teaching of re incarnation in a simpler and more emphatic manner in the Jewish book, *Zohar* The following passage from this scripture will be read with considerable interest

'All the souls are subject to the transmigration and men do not know which are the ways of the Most High in their regard They do not know how many transformations and mysterious trials they must undergo how many

souls and spirits come to this world without returning to the palace of the Divine King. The souls must re-enter the Absolute Substance whence they have emerged. But to accomplish this end they must develop all the perfections, the germ of which is planted in them; and if they have not fulfilled this condition during one life, they must commence another, a third, and so forth, until they have acquired the condition which fits them for re-union with God."

Let us consider what the *Bible* says regarding the great truth of re-incarnation. Christ passes by and he sees a man blind from his birth, and his disciples put this question to him, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (*St. John*, Chapter 9.) And Christ says in reply, "Neither had this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." The theologians take a stand on passages of this nature and conclude that the theory of re-incarnation was never taught by Christ. But this is not correct. There are other passages in the *Bible*, which give an indication that Christ knew the whole truth, but he withheld it, thinking that the time was not ripe to utter it.

In *St. John*, Chapter V, there is an allusion to Christ, having cured a man who had suffered from paralysis for years. This man had come to the pool at Bethesda, like many others, to get a cure by its mystic waters. But he could not get into the waters. Christ then, beholding his helplessness, said, "Rise, take thy bed and walk." And the man took up his bed and began to walk, relieved that he had been made whole. He was met by Christ in the temple afterwards and Jesus told him, "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." This indicates that the man suffered because of

his sins in the past life and he was warned that if he led a sinful life again a worse fate would overcome him

A hint as to repeated re incarnations is also got from Christ's declaring Elijah and John the Baptist as one and the same person. If the *Bible* were rightly interpreted it should be evident that Christ never meant eternal reward or punishment as a result of the experiences of one birth. Take this sentence. In my Father's house are many halting places. The halting places referred to are evidently the rest houses where the ego or the human soul takes rest in the other world before it re starts for its earthly journey. When Christ says to his people Be ye perfect that comment would be an idle one if it was meant that in the span of a single life of a few years, they could achieve Christ like perfection. The disciple is not above his Master (*S Luke VI 40*) said Christ no doubt and that clearly gives a hint as to the series of lives which one has to pass through to attain the final goal of perfection.

Of all the Ecclesiastical Fathers Origen is considered the most brilliant and his learned treatise *De Principiis*, contains several references to re incarnation as a Christian teaching. The question naturally arises why has the doctrine of re incarnation no definite place in Modern Christianity? It is said that it was prevalent in the beginning but it was condemned and ruled out by the Second Council of Constantinople in the sixth century (A D 553). Thus it disappeared out of official Christianity. But truly speaking it did not disappear. It persisted in the literature of Christendom particularly in the mystical songs of the Albigenses who clung to the original teachings of Christ even at the cost of their lives. This school has given many martyrs.

Islam, the offspring of Christianity, does not apparently teach re-incarnation. The *Koran* speaks of eternal reward and punishment for man's good or bad actions in this life. The followers of Muhammad are mostly fatalists. Their belief in predestination is like an unction to the soul. It helps them to bear the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" with a fortitude and faith in God, which is a great thing. There is no definite teaching of re-incarnation in Islam, as in Hinduism or Buddhism, but all the same, it must be said, that there is nothing against it in the *Koran*. In fact, several passages may be quoted from this Holy Book which, if liberally interpreted like the Bible, suggest re-incarnation. Take for example these passages:

"*Ya ayyoha! insano innaka kadihun ela Rabbeka kadihan fa mulaqihe . latarkabun-na tabaqan an tabaq.*"

"O Man! thou hast to go back unto God,
Thy God, thy Self, with labour and with pain,
Ascending stage by stage plane after plane "

"*Innahu jabda-ul-khalqa summa yoidoh, le yajze-
gallazina amanu wa a'melus-saulehate b il qiste .
Kama bada ana awwala khalqin noidak . Yakhloqo
kum fi butuni ummuhati kum khalqam mina ba de
khalqin zulumatın zalas "*

"He makes a world creation, then again
He reproduces it, so that He may
With justice recompense those who believe
In God's Word and do good to fellow-beings
God sayeth—As We did originate
The first creation, so we reproduce
He in your mothers' wombs createth you,
Creation on creation yet again "

*"Minha khalaqna kum, wa fi ha naidu-kum, wa
minha nukhruju kum ala ta'aratn ukhra"*

"From out the earth have I now given birth
To you, and I will send you into it
Again and bring you forth from it again,
Again, repeatedly, until the End"

*"Kaifa takfuruna billahe wa kuntum amwatan fa
ahyakum summa yumitokum summa zohyikum
summa ilahe tarja'un."*

"How can you make denial of your God
Who made you live again when you had died,
Will make you dead again, again alive
Until you go back finally to Him?"

These passages from the Holy *Koran*, particularly the first and the last are enough to show that the doctrine of re-incarnation is neither opposed nor foreign to the teachings of *Nabi Mahomed*

Three quarters of the population of the world either by religion or by intellectual conviction, believe in re-incarnation as it affords a reasonable solution to the knotty problems of life. There are many passages in Eastern and Western literature which indicate belief in re-incarnation

The following lines of Wordsworth are immortal

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home

Heaven lies about us in our infancy,

Murdam az haiwan o adam shudam;
Pas che tarsam kas ze murdan gum shudam?
Hamlae digar bi-miram as bashar,
Ta bar aram as malayak bal o par!
Az malak ham bayadam justan ze zu,
Kulle shayn halikun illa Wujh-U.
Pas a'dam gardam a'dam chun arghanun
Goyad am 'Inna ilaiha raje 'un!
Bare digar az malak farran shawam,
An che andar wahm n-ayad an shawam."
 "Like grass have I grown o'er and o'er again,
 Seven hundred seventy bodies have I seen.
 From out the form of mineral I passed
 And as a vegetable lived again,
 From out the vegetable form I died
 And lifted up a head as animal,
 The form of animal I put away
 And took the human shape of Adam-Eve,
 Why shall I fear that if I die once more
 I shall be lost? Nay, I shall surely gain,
 At the next onset, dying out of man
 The flowing locks and shining wings of angels.
 And finally, when next I take my flight
 From e'en that world, I surely shall become
 That which beyond all comprehension rests!
 For all things pass except the Primal Cause,
 The Cause of Causes, the Face of the Self,
 Which is Non being of Aught-Else than self,
 (For self is the Negation of Not-Self)
 And when I am in such Non-being, then
 My Being in Non Being shall resound
 In organ tones, *'Thou hast returned to Me'* "

The teaching of *Karma* and Reincarnation, as adumbrated by Buddha, is very beautifully described by

Sir Edwin Arnold in his immortal poem *Light of Asia*
The following lines are bewitching

' The books say well my Brothers' each man's life
The outcome of his former living is
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,
The bygone right breeds bliss
That which ye sow ye reap See yonder fields!
The sesamum was sesamum the corn
Was corn The Silence and the Darkness knew!
So is a man's fate born '

We would recommend to the readers E. D. Walker's
book, *Re incarnation* He has a thorough grasp of the
subject and has very successfully dealt with it in an
inimitable style The following will be read with interest

"There are multitudes of inhabited worlds upoo
which the same person is successively born according to
his attractions To the earthly life he may return again
and again, dropping the memory of past experiences and
carrying like an embryonic germ, the concise summary
of former lives into each coming one Every act bears
upon the resultant which shall steer the soul into its next
habitation not only on earth but in the more exalted or
debased regions of Heaven and Hell Thus The chain
of law binds all existences and the only escape is by
the final absorption into *Brahma* (Page 246.)

Life is a sacred burden. It is a mission We have to
work hard and wipe out the effects of bad *Karma* in the
past and re sow the seeds of good *Karma* for it is only
by renewal of good actions in life that we shall go a
step forward on the ladder which reaches God

' Heaven is not reached at a single bound
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies
And we mount to its summit round by round."

This world is only but one stage in the life of eternity and if we take the straight course, not turning into the bye lanes, if we avoid the cesspools of passion and the dung-hills of sloth and envy, we can curtail the number of earthly rounds and reach the goal quicker. The success of the journey depends upon our own individual effort, individual will. It is only when we have completely purified ourselves of all the dross in us, that the succession of lives on earth will cease.

"Only when all the dross of sin is quit,
Only when life dies like a white flame spent,
Death dies along with it."

Light of Asia

It is argued that if man is ordained to live many lives on earth to get purification and attain perfection, why has not God given him the memory to know the past? When we are fast asleep, do we remember anything when we wake up? Do we remember our childhood? Take this illustration. When a room is darkened, all light being shut out, we can see the pictures thrown on the screen by the movement of lantern slides. If the doors were opened and the sunlight allowed to flood the room, the pictures on the screen would be completely obliterated. In the same way, as long as we allow senses to dominate our body, the inward spiritual light which burns dimly within us, has no scope for manifestation.

Man has two bodies—the gross and the subtle. Those who practise *Raja Yoga* tell us that by means of concentration and meditation, it is possible to remember the past lives. It is said of Buddha that he could remember five hundred of his previous births.

Chittah, the subconscious mind or the subliminal self, is the storehouse of all past experiences and knowledge.

to the thinking that the impressions and ideas, the peculiarities of character and powers, which we develop and possess, are not lost. They are transmitted. There is a most significant passage in the *Upanishads*, which bears out the statement that experiences are transmitted from one life to another. 'In man, there are arteries thin as a hair, split 1000 times filled with fluids, blue, red green, yellow etc. The tenuous involucrum (the base or ethereal frame of the astral body) is lodged in them and the ideal residues of the experiences of the former embodiments (or re incarnations) adhere to the said tenuous involucrum and accompany it in its passage from body to body." Science teaches us also that what is unmanifest at one stage, becomes manifest at a later stage. What is latent becomes patent. Some insects sleep during the whole winter. They awake only in spring. Just as the chrysalis which is embedded in the cocoon gets rejuvenated in spring, the soul manifests itself in a new body, after the death of the former but is possessed of all those characteristics which had been formed in its previous existence.

It we do not remember our previous births it is because God is so merciful in making us forget our past associations. Life would be a torment if we knew the past. God is like a benevolent banker, who tells us what balance is left to our credit and debit, without frightening us with a maze of day to-day figures.

It is not advisable to rake up the past. We have to move forward and onward without looking backward, for that is the plan of God. Some achieve salvation quicker, others take a longer time. It depends upon one's own efforts and determination. Life is a pilgrimage. The path is long and thorny but the goal cannot be lost sight

of. It is to approach God, step by step, grade by grade birth by birth.

"We weep when we are born, not when we die!
So was it destined, and thus came I here,
To walk the earth and wear the form of man,
To suffer bravely as becomes my state,
One step, one grade, one cycle nearer God "

We have explained how one birth theory does not satisfy our reasoning. Some live long, some live for a few years only. A child, that dies in its infancy, has gathered no experience at all and to say that after its death it must either go to heaven and hell for eternity is absurd. It is true that modern spiritualism has established the fact that the dead are not dead. They are living in the Other World, in different planes, according to the merit of their actions in this life. But that existence in the Spirit Land is only for a longer or shorter span of time, according to the merits of each case, and the egos return to our plane of action for further purification and perfection.

We must accept the truth that the soul is immortal. It must have had its pre-existence. It could not have come from nothing. To speak in the words of *Vedantic* teaching "Non existence can never become existence and existence can never become non existence." In other words, the impressions and ideas, which we form in this life can never be effaced or destroyed. They mould the inner subtle body and, when we die, it must take another body to give expression to the feelings, ideas, impressions, character, will, desire, power, gathered, collected and experienced in the present life. As the *Bhagavad-Gita* says, "Birth must be followed by death and death must be followed by birth." It is true that we cannot

remember the past incarnations. But as Shri Krishna says to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Both you and I have passed through many lives, you do not recollect any, but I know them all " (Ch IV, 5)

The one birth theory, which is untenable, has its protagonists, however, in the materialists and agnostics who believe in heredity. Let us then examine this question of transmission of hereditary qualities. The question that arises is can a single cell of the parents create in the babe, that is born, all the characteristics of the mind, body and soul that belong to them? There are myriads of cells in the human body and for one cell to do such a marvellous feat is beyond human conception. It means that the soul of the babe was not in existence before the babe was born but that it was created by the parents. This theory of heredity does not stand the test of facts. We know that the offsprings of two parents, far from inheriting the traits and characters of their progenitors, many times are quite poles apart in their intellectual, moral and spiritual development. If a man has four or five children, none of them may be of the same mental or moral tendencies. One may turn out a prodigy of learning and knowledge, the second an idiot, the third a murderer the fourth a mediocre. These variations are so true that the theory of heredity does not offer any satisfactory solution.

Dr Weismann's theory of "Continuity of the Germ Plasm" discredits the view of heredity. He points out that parents are not creators of offsprings. They are mere channels through which certain qualities embedded in the germ cell, are transmitted. They are supposed to belong to some common stock. This brings us to the very door of the Re incarnation Theory. It repudiates

the one-birth theory, *viz.*, that the soul of the infant born is inseparable from the parental organism. The soul in the infant, which has all the potentialities of a varied and rich life, is not the product of the brain or nervous system or the bodily organism of the parents. What the child inherits is only the physical or bodily characteristics of its parents.

The Doctrine of Karma

The soul or *Atman* is quite a separate entity. As an emanation from the *Paramatman* it is, as the *Gita* teaches, always perfect, but it must take several or many births before it can bloom into perfect manifestation or Self-Realisation, which is the goal and end of evolution, both material and psychical. It is neither God nor Satan that is responsible for our actions on this earth. Man is entirely a free agent. As you sow, so must you reap, is the law of the universe, irrefutable and indestructible. This brings us to the doctrine of *Karma*.

One cannot believe in re-incarnation without belief in *Karma*. The law of *Karma* is variously named. It is the law of cause and effect, the law of compensation and retribution, happiness and suffering, action and re-action. It is an exacting law of justice. It favours none. Nothing exists in nature without a cause. If we fling a rubber ball against the dead wall, it will bump back with the same velocity and rapidity as we throw it. We are responsible for our actions. Good deeds must bear pleasant fruit. Bad deeds must give rise to bitter fruit. Each one has to work out his own salvation. Each one is accountable to his own God. As Pythagoras says, "We are our own children."

"Our acts our angels are for good or ill
Our fatal shadows that walk with us still."

We are what we have made ourselves by our past *Karma*. It must be remembered that "the hand that smites us is our own" and "whatever a man soweth, he must reap." "Man is the architect of his own fortune." To work incessantly, diligently, planting seeds of good action for the next life's harvest and patiently removing the weeds and poisonous shrubs that have overgrown the soil, the result of our bad *Karma* in the past, is the aim and purpose of life.

Buddha looked upon human misery and suffering as the result of man's own ignorance and *Kama* (desire). By ignorance is meant non-perception or wrong perception of the truth. *Kama* (desire) is identified with fire. No amount of fuel can satiate the hunger of fire. In the same way, Buddha argued that *Kama*, the primary causa of re-incarnation, can in no way be satisfied by indulgence. Ignorance and desire can cease only if the notion of "I" and "Mine" is completely blotted out from man's purview of life. If it be realised that there is neither any subject nor object of desire, desires will vanish. To achieve the object it is very necessary to look upon everything in nature as a passing phantom without any substance or reality. This is what is called the philosophy of *sunyata* (void). "One who believes in the void (*sunyata*) is not attracted by worldly things, because they are baseless. He is not delighted by gain nor is he cast down by loss. He does not feel proud of his glory, nor does he hold back from lack of glory. Scorn does not make him shrink, nor does praise elate him. Neither does he feel attached to pleasures, nor does he feel aversion to pain. He who is not attracted by worldly things knows what the void

means. Therefore one who believes in the void has neither likes nor dislikes."

Free Will

Each *Jiva* is born in a condition of life, rich or poor, happy or miserable, according to its past *Karma*. But that does not mean that it has only to follow the path chalked out as its destined course and make no effort for self-improvement. Freedom of will and freedom of action are the pivotal points upon which the whole of one's future life depends. The soul is a free agent. It has to shape the future course. Self-exertion and self-effort are indispensable factors in improvement of one's own ego. The knowledge gained in previous births is of considerable assistance. It puts one in a favourable position. But to ascend the ladder of evolution continuous active striving is absolutely necessary. The potentialities of the soul are infinite. The following spirit message of Rishi Ram Rom is of considerable importance:

"The journey of the soul occupies thousands of years and is through several births, unless it is hastened by knowledge of the spiritual values and the nature of evolution. Remember that every single soul is not only immortal, but is infinite in strength and capacity. When the soul limits itself by taking a body, it gets all the weaknesses and limitations of the physical body. When each soul realizes its strength, it will realise that it is as much the master of creation as the Godhead and that it can become a universe by its own strength. All souls are kept ignorant of their power by the phenomenon of being identified with limited

bodies. As soon as it realises this, there will be no limits to its powers "

Those who submit to the thought that they are mere pawns on the chess board of life, moved by a Higher Destiny, are doing immeasurable harm to themselves. Their present life is one shaped by their own past *Karma*, but to shape a better future lies in their own hands. The soul's powers are infinite. This should be realised. It is our ignorance, our apathy, our desire for the allurements of life, that are the impediments in the soul's progress to reach its destiny. The soul evolves rapidly if the value of right thinking, right living and right conduct is understood. Prayers and unselfish service help a great deal. As Rishi Ram Ram says in one of his spirit messages: The life energies should be controlled and directed towards the higher ideal of realising **ONENESS WITH THE DIVINE MIND** and this is done by thinking and doing every day as if you had the trusteeship of the world, same as the Lord would feel about the trusteeship of the great Universe "

It is the desire for physical life that drives a *Jiva* to take birth. Edward Carpenter gives the analogy of a soldier going to the battle-front. He does not seek what fresh furniture he can carry on his back but rather what he may leave behind, knowing well that every additional thing which he cannot freely use and handle is an impediment to him. Desires make the disembodied soul crave for earthly habitation and the cycle of birth and re birth goes on and on.

The faith of each man is the initial guide along the path of the inner life. All Truths given by great *Rishis*, *Vedas* and Revelations will guide the inner life. All

these have to be understood *in the spirit* and not merely in the letter.

The life in the physical plane is the outward expression of the inner life. A *Jiva* that has attained to the stage of human evolution can fix the pace of further evolution by modes of life. A *Jiva* engrossed in the pleasures of the senses has to take incarnation again and again into the physical plane till the desires of the astral body become satiated and cease to trouble. The first step onward begins by the control and elimination of desires. These tie up the man with the objects of desires. Detachment from these desires during life, is freedom for the *Jiva*. The *Jiva's* evolution to the highest plane may be accomplished within one life by intense inward life, raising the soul to the highest spiritual plane. The inward life is the great spiritual path that every *Jiva* has to tread in its onward march. The journey is wearisome or full of joy, according to the energy with which the *Jiva* aspires to reach the goal."

(Spirit Message of Rishi Ram Ram)

Theory of Fate

Napoleon used to say that he was a Child of Fate. No man was born with such singular intellectual powers as he. He could have risen to the highest place in any sphere of human activity—law, religion, science, literature,—and done immense good to the world at large. But he did not make use of his great talents for the benefit of mankind. He took to the sword. So long as he conquered countries with a view to laying the foundation of a 'United States of Europe', he met with success. But when he became ambitious and selfish

countries he conquered to his brothers to rule. Nemesis overtook him. When he was imprisoned in the solitary island of St. Helena he reflected on the past. This great man, the Child of Fate, as he called himself, realised when he lay helpless and miserable, that he had wasted a whole incarnation. Fate helped him for some time. Why? Because he had to reap the reward of his past good *Karma*. Why did Nemesis overtake him in the end? Because the evil seeds he had sown had begun to sprout into bitter fruit. And the lonely man, who once dominated the world, submitted to his lot. Gaoled in a most ignoble manner, and subjected to petty tyrannies of a mean and despicable gaoler, he died of a lingering death.

Napoleon, in the flush of his early career, was reaping the good fruits of his past *Karma*. A lonely prisoner in the island of St. Helena, crest fallen, gnawing away his heart and awaiting death with the calmness of a philosopher, he was re-changing the cloth for his next incarnation.

"Think not on Destiny but act thyself," is the adage. Freedom is the very essence of *Karma*. Manu, the great law giver, says

'Thou canst not gather what thou dost not sow,
As thou dost plant the tree, so will it grow
Success in every enterprise depends
On Destiny and man combined the acts
Of Destiny are not of man's control.
Think not on Destiny but act thyself,
Whatever the act a man commits, whate'er
His state of Mind of the re-compense
Must he receive in corresponding body "

The law of casuality works in nature. Every cause must have an effect. If fatalism were admitted it would cut

at the very root of ethics and religion. There would be no purpose in living. There would be no urge to rise higher and higher. There would be no glow in life. There would be apathy and barrenness. Justice would be thrown to the wind. Injustice would be enthroned.

God's ways are just. Christian theology teaches that man's fall from paradise was due to his own fault. It was no fault of God's decree. The Biblical story runs that God gave everything to Adam. But he chose to transgress His command. He was ungrateful. God made him just and right and gave him sufficient strength to resist temptation. But he did not exercise his free will and so fell a victim to the "glowing lies" of the Satan. There is thus a clear admission of free will in the Christian teachings. This is the foundation of the whole ethical superstructure of life.

No doubt, there are limits to the exercise of our freedom. Merit and success very often do not go together. This is attributed to fate, luck, fortune. In fact, it is a puzzle to many of us. But the theory of Re-incarnation and *Karma* solves this puzzle. There are three forces working: (1) our free will, (2) our character and (3) fate, which is the result of past *Karma*. Every act we perform is an action in eternity. We are born with certain tendencies, no doubt, but at the same time God has given us the power and the free will to improve upon them and to rise higher and higher in the scale of life.

It is a mistaken idea that by repentance the bitter fruit of a bad deed can be entirely escaped. If a man puts his hand in fire it must burn. The law of retribution works relentlessly in nature. The following lines from Zarthustra's *Gathas* (33, 1 and 43, 5) are very significant:

"Great Ratush! Thou dost give unto each one
 Just retribution, even as he is,
 Vicious or virtuous, false or true.
 Thou, Mazdal that art both First and Last,
 At the beginning and the end of life,
 According to Thy fixed eternal Laws,
 Thou dost award to each his just desert,
 Reward or punishment, in word and deed,
 Ill unto ill and good unto the good."

The law of *Karma* is an eternal law, which no mercy can alter or change. *Karma* is more educative than punitive. Truly speaking, "There is no punishment or reward in *Karma*." Every one has to work out the effects of his own *Karma*.

"Hol ye who suffer know
 Ye suffer from yourselves,
 None else compels."

It is true that many times good and holy person suffer the most in life. This is because God wants them to wipe off the effects of their past *Karma* in one life to give them *Mukti* for ever.

To serve suffering humanity is the surest way of overcoming the effects of bad *Karma*. A man who serves in this manner gets more and more powers from God. He is made an instrument by Him to further the cause of Evolution.

"Let thy soul lend its ears to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun."

"Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself has wiped it from the sufferer's eye."

"But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off until the pain that caused it is removed."

There is a tendency in all living forms to vary. There can be no organic evolution without this tendency to vary. The Evolutionary Theory of Darwin is very helpful. It explains organic evolution. But we should not stop there. It is incomplete. Its value can be understood only if we understand the theory of Re-incarnation. Darwin limited himself to the evolution of the body. We are concerned with the evolution of the soul as well and when we take both the Evolutionary Theory and the Re-incarnation Theory together, we get a complete and whole picture of life, its aim and its end. In fact, the theory of Re-incarnation gives a definite and conclusive touch to the whole theory of Evolution which otherwise is incomplete. Evolution attains its highest mark of perfection when man's spirit identifies itself with the Universal Spirit or God.

The vibration of *Prana* is the cause of manifestation of everything in the universe. *Prana* is greater than the largest thing in the world. Swami Vivekananda gives an instance. A mighty engine, running at full speed, will not crush even a worm crawling on the rails. The latter has only to use its will and save itself by turning aside. There are two movements in nature. One is upward the other is downward. There is a movement of the subtle towards the gross; it is a downward movement. There is the reverse movement of the gross towards the subtle; it is an upward movement. Man has emanated from God and he must go back to God.

The following quotations from the *Vedas* are significant as they give a correct conception of the origin of creation.

'Before the manifestation of the phenomenal universe there was neither non entity nor entity neither atmosphere nor sky beyond. Death was not nor therefore

The *Gospel of St John* contains references to the high origin of man and the necessity of his re-incarnating on the earth to achieve perfection for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Take these passages

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."

"He that cometh from above is above all he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth he that cometh from heaven is above all"

(Ch III, page 92.)

It should be clear that it is not the body that re-incarnates. It is the Mind, the Thinker, the Individual, the Ego that re-incarnates. The function of the ego is to get the training and purification in this life or in as many lives as be necessary to get complete mastery of the animal nature and then stride out to be re united with the Divine Monad. 'Wisdom is the fruitage of many incarnations,' and when all the experiences have been garnered we come to the final and complete evolution of man into divinity. As Mrs Besant says, 'The Divine Man is the glorious product of the centuried evolution.' The object of Re incarnation is thus to train the animal man so that it may become a perfect vehicle of the Divine and the re-incarnating Ego is the agent, carrying out the changes. *Arhatship* is the last and final stage in the evolution of man when *Karma* is completely annihilated. To speak in the words of Mrs Besant 'Hence in the upward climbing, one desire after another must be unloosed desire for personal enjoyment, personal pleasure personal gain, personal loves, personal attainments and, last and subtlest of all, desire for personal perfection, for the personal self

"must be lost in the One Self, that is the Self of all that lives."

The Process of Re-birth

Let us take a bird's eye view of the whole process of re-birth. God is all consciousness. He is linked with every human soul. He is immanent in nature. The soul draws its consciousness from God which is the parental reservoir. Consciousness is of the nature of the soul. It belongs to the *Atman* and the whole process of spiritual evolution is only a process of the manifestation of the *Atmic* consciousness in a larger and larger measure. Similarly, the mind, the power of thinking and intellectual perception really belong to the *Atman*. The Mind appears as something different from the *Atman* only because, even in the relatively high mental plane, the *Atman* exercises these powers through the medium of *manasic* matter which forms the *manasic* body.

God determines the environments of the soul according to man's *Karma*. The soul perceives through the five senses and the Mind or *Manas*, which is composed of *manas buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara*. *Manas* is "Shall I do or not?" faculty. *Buddhi* is assertive. It says, "I shall do. I will do." *Chitta* is "I feel. I recollect" faculty, and *Ahankara* speaks in terms of "I" and "Mine." It is self-consciousness. To speak in the words of Feradun K. Dadachanji: The Mind, then, as far as we can apprehend it, is the measure of the man—the psychological apparatus so to say, of the Soul: the inner man is really of this, not of the outer visible, palpable, ponderable semblance, yclept the 'body'. When the outer vesture is cast, in other words, the tangible coil is shed, the real man, *i.e.*, mind-*gun* soul (God within) takes his departure for fair

fields and pastures new." (*Philosophy of Zoroastrianism and Comparative Study of Religions*, pages 112-113.)

God is all-consciousness. He is linked with all-beings. It is by His Divine Will that the human body and soul are mysteriously united. It is only when He wishes that this union can be dissolved. *Karma* is the instrument employed for determining the chequered career of the soul and its destiny.

Further Evidence in favour of Re-incarnation

If Re-incarnation be not a proven scientific fact, at least it is the most rational hypothesis. Three-fourths of the population of the world believes in it. It is the only solution for the problem of inequalities in life. Let us advance a few more arguments in favour of this theory.

Why is it that there is so much of mental and moral progress in men and not in animals? Men progress but animals remain almost stationary. This difference is attributed to the fact, that when man is born, he brings with him a storehouse of past experiences, which help him in evolving his life. These past experiences are the cause and measure of his mental, moral and spiritual development. In the case of animals, mental progress is no doubt slow and very little marked, for they do not show any sign of changing their normal tendencies, except slightly under man's special training.

We have already quoted some instances of man's precocity. A few more can be added. Pascal, when he was twelve years old, discovered the greater part of plane Geometry. Shankaracharya wrote and finished his great commentary on the *Vedanta* philosophy, when he was

twelve years old. It is said about the boy, Zerah Colburn that when he was hardly eight years old, he could solve at a glance, without making use of any figures, perplexing mathematical problems. Once he was asked how many minutes there were in 48 years, and he promptly and correctly answered, 25,228,800. Can this type of wondrous precocity be explained by any other means save this, that the incarnating ego brings with it a vast store-house of past experiences? Whatever a soul has mastered in a previous life, it must manifest in the present life.

J. Arthur Thomson, an eminent English scientist, says, "The world is one, not twofold, the spiritual influx is the primal reality and there is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning." God is verily described in all scriptures as without beginning, without end. We men are emanations from God. And after countless stages of physical existence, we must go back to God. Life's aim is spiritual, not material. Re incarnation is the only visible solution of the riddle of life.

Theory of Transmigration

The theory of Transmigration or *Metempsychosis* refers to the transmigration of the soul from one body to another after death. It is a very controversial question, whether the human soul descends into the body of a lower animal or plant. The purpose of life is to move onwards. Man has to progress and become God. If he degrades his God-given faculties, and descends to the lowest level of a brute in his conduct in life, he is re-born on earth, and given the lowest human body by way of chastisement. But it appears, the teaching was prevalent in ancient India among Hindu philosophers, and even

Pythagoras and some Greek writers áver that the human soul does transmigrate into lower animals and plants. The Laws of Manu state, "For sinful acts, mostly corporeal, a man shall assume a vegetable or mineral form after death, for such acts, mostly verbal, the form of a bird, a beast for acts, mostly mental the lowest of human conditions." Plato, Plotinus, Pythagoras—to name a few of the Greek writers,—seem to have endorsed this Hindu notion of the transmigration of the human soul through the lower animals and plants. But the question that arises is, can a human soul in a lower animal, say a monkey or rhinoceros, give expression to its immortal self? Can a gallon of water be contained in a pint-flask? The Pythagorean and the Hindu teaching of the soul, wandering through animals, appears to be more allegorical than real.

We know when we make the above statement that we are treading on dangerous grounds of controversy. It may evoke a severe criticism and displeasure from those who believe in the theory of *Metempsychosis* or transmigration of souls. Our reasoning is that God is immanent in nature. The Divine is present in every creature in the universe. This spark of the Life Universal, which is an emanation from God, is an impelling force which drives the vehicle onwards. But in the case of trees, birds and lower animals this impelling force in spite of its divine origin has not the same measure of mind and consciousness, as in human beings because of the vehicle being on the lower plane. The body is too gross for any divine manifestation.

Man's physical body however is the best vehicle for the expression of the Divine within him. There is *jiva* in everything. But the *jiva* in the tree the bird

the lower animal is not the same as the human *jiva*. It is mindless. It is Conscienceless. It is erratic, aimless, as Mrs. Annie Besant would say. This Divine Monad touches the animal brain, no doubt. It vivifies it, but it cannot illuminate. Man alone is destined to get illumination. Physical man is the most suitable and ready instrument for the evolution of intelligent entities. However wicked a man may be, he must come back and take a human form and not go back to the lower kingdom for the evolution of his soul. Irving S. Cooper in his very beautiful work, *Re-incarnation, the Hope of the World*, says: "Re-incarnation does not mean that the human soul can be re-born in an animal body. This belief is to be found in the myths of primitive people, in popular Hinduism and Buddhism, and even in the writings of Plato, but it is obviously a superstition, not a fact. To think of a human being, endowed with keen sensibilities, moral perception and intellectual power, as being re-born after death in the body of an unmoral and un-intelligent animal, is certainly the abyss of illogic and could serve no moral or evolutionary process whatsoever in the universe. Every process of Nature has always been found to have a definite purpose and re-incarnation is no exception to the rule." (Page 21.)

"The whole of Nature is living." There is a wave after wave of life, surging in the universe. In the mineral kingdom, the consciousness is very little, hardly noticeable or perceptible. In the vegetable kingdom, the discoveries of Bose have revealed that plants have a sensitiveness. In the animal kingdom, we find that the lower animals show definitely some signs of consciousness. They have definite feelings, passions and desires. But it is only in man, after countless evolutions of the

soul, that the ego reaches the standard of the highest spiritual understanding

We must also realize the fact that in the lower kingdoms, "the consciousness evolves in the mass " It is only in the human kingdom that we are concerned with individual evolution Lower animals have 'group souls " These group souls develop very slowly In the case of domestic animals such as an affectionate and intelligent dog, it may be ready for entrance into the human kingdom But at the time of the entrance 'it is not yet a human soul " As Irving S Cooper says, He has a rudimentary astral and mental body, which are portions of the original group soul "

Physical existence is the hardest school, in which the human soul has to gather experiences of life and the idea of incarnation is to give opportunity for perfection of the human soul for eternity

Nirvana

We have shown in the foregoing pages that re incarnation is the only possible conclusion that we can come to in explaining the diversity of human life in all spheres, economic, mental and moral Even if it be contended that there is no trace of the teaching of re incarnation in such great world religions as Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam these religions speak of resurrection Man's destiny is high He has to receive his crown of glory, but it is only after a fiery trial and series of incarnations "No cross, no crown", is an ancient proverb The world is a stage and every one has to play his part for better or worse The law of morality and compensation and chastisement works most rigidly in life Even

the best of prophets from the time of Zoroaster to Muhammad were beset with temptations in the struggle of life. Zoroaster was tempted. But he rose above all temptations. We know how Christ was tempted when he passed forty days in the wilderness after his baptism by John the Baptist. "If thou be the son of God command that these stones be made breads" whispered the Devil thus trying to put into his brain the puff of vanity. He was induced to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple and thus exhibit his miraculous power to astound the populace. The Devil finally showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." What temptations to satisfy one's ambition! But Christ resists them. He is meek and gentle. He knows nothing of pride or vanity. As he moves on to the final stage of his life the persecutions increase. He is betrayed by Judas. He stands his trials at the hands of Pilate and Herod and he is finally crucified. Christ bitterly cries out "O Lord why hast Thou forsaken me? Is he really forsaken? No. He is glorified. The sole idea is that the Spirit must descend into matter and suffer for without pain and tribulation there can be no resurrection. As Buddha preached complete triumph is only obtained by inner strength to resist all temptations all sorrows and miseries all difficulties and troubles. This is how Buddha proclaimed his freedom:

Many a house of life
 Hath held me—seeking ever him who wrought
 These prisons of the senses sorrow fraught
 Sore was my ceaseless strife!
 But now
 Thou builder of this tabernacle—thou!
 I know thee! Never shalt thou build again

These walls of pain,
 Nor raise the roof-tree of decents, nor lay
 Fresh rafters on the clay
 Broken thy house is, and the ridge-pole split!
 Delusion fashioned it!
 Safe pass I thence—deliverance to obtain "

The final state of bliss that a man can reach to, even in his physical existence is that of *Nirvana*, as preached by Buddha. What is *Nirvana*? It is commonly known as annihilation. But annihilation of what? Is it to be understood in the sense of the extinguishment of the candle by a breath? Man does not lose his consciousness, but on the contrary he feels that by destroying the sense of 'I' and 'Mine' he can become God. The following lines from Sir Edwin Arnold in the *Light of Asia* express in a most beautiful manner the pertinent truth

' Seeking nothing, he gains all,
 Fore going self, the Universe grows 'I',
 If any teach *Nirvana* is to cease,
 Say unto such they lie
 If any teach *Nirvana* is to live,
 Say unto such they err not knowing this,
 Nor what light shines beyond their broken lamps
 Nor lifeless timeless bliss

Leadbeater wittily describes hell as time without God and heaven as God without time. *Nirvana* is the eternal state of happiness. Mrs Annie Besant describes *Nirvana* as a plenum not a void, the expansion of consciousness, a centre of a circle without circumference. Buddha said long ago

' Do not complain and cry and pray, but open your eyes and see for the Light is all about you and it is so wonderful so beautiful so far beyond anything of

which men have ever dreamt, for which they have ever prayed, and it is for ever and for ever."

The ancient Egyptians believed in the seven grade of Brotherhood. These according to the stages of mental and spiritual development are, as under:

(1) The Pupil, (2) The Disciple, (3) The Brother, (4) The Elder, (5) The Master, (6) The One who knows, (*Isangoma*) and (7) The Perfect Man (*Abakulubantu*).

When one reaches the last stage, re-birth ceases for him. He can dwell on earth if he wishes, but he can relinquish his body at will. He is a part of the cosmic whole and has full control on the vibrations of the higher planes. He can send despatches and thus exert in shaping the mass of individual opinion and consciousness. The highest goal of man is to reach this perfect state of consciousness. To do good, not for the purpose of merely achieving heaven but to serve mankind even after attainment of *Nirvana*, is the highest glimpse of philosophy, which Buddha's immortal life gives us. As man perfects his soul, he gets mastery over his body. The soul can leave it at its will. Even Muhammad teaches: *Muto qabl un tamuto*, "Die, before you die."

(Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.)

The highest freedom is the freedom from the bonds of *Karma*. Then alone the soul attains ONENESS WITH GOD.

CHAPTER VII

THE IDEAL OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION

There is a consensus of opinion that owing to various scientific discoveries which are bringing the different parts of the world into nearer contact it is necessary to consider the world as a unit. There is a cry for world organisations in all spheres of human activity—social, economical and religious. The conditions of life today are so interwoven that the false barriers of separation require to be removed.

Science has annihilated distances. The wireless and the aeroplane have brought the different parts of the world into closer relationship. Those days are gone when one could ply his peaceful trade and sip his tea or coffee without being affected by a distant conflagration. Today we are like one body. If one part of it aches or is injured, the whole body politic suffers. We are beginning to feel that we are closely united with the rest of the world.

The wars in the last two or three decades have taught us a most salutary lesson that in the prosperity, safety and security of others, is our prosperity, safety and security. A desire to participate equally in all things of life is considered to be a fit basis of our future political, social, economic and religious life. The questions pertaining to the world as a unit have now a greater claim on us. Not isolation, but inter relationship; not selfishness but altruism; not nationalism but internationalism, not imperialism, but humanism—these are the ideals that the present war, particularly, must prepare us to achieve in a reasonable course of time. The determination to

the way for a universal religion when the love of God can spread to the least of the Shepherd's flock

We are not here prepared to discuss Baha u llah's claim to prophetship, that he is the promised Messiah, come to give a revealed message to suffering mankind. The data at our hand to adjudge him as a prophet is too meagre to enter into any disputation of this nature, though the followers of Baha u llah may acclaim him as such. But it will not be denied that the teaching of Baha u llah synchronises with the wave of thought current for the last many years in different countries. His is not any new teaching. He is only giving expression to what has already been felt by different minds in different countries.

If Baha u llah is a prophet H G Wells is also a prophet. The world is but one country and mankind its citizens. 'This thought has not any stamp of Baha u llah's originality. "Let not a man glory in that, that he loves his country let him glory in this, that he loves his kind." This is really another beautiful thought but poets have sung of this continuously in different climes. "Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." "Be ye as the fingers of the one hand, the members of one body." "All the saplings of the world have appeared from one tree and all the drops from one ocean and all beings owe their existence to one Being." These are most inspiring messages of Baha u llah though there is nothing new in their conception. The various unities Baha u llah preaches are

- (a) Political unity,
- (b) Economical unity,
- (c) Cultural unity,
- (d) Racial unity,
- (e) Language unity,
- (f) Religious unity.

Baha-u-llah's ideals are the same as those of the Freemasons, the Theosophists, the Socialists, the various philosophers, who have always dreamed of a religion of a larger Brotherhood, which seeks justification in the eradication of prejudices and iniquities, to raise a common superstructure of civilization, based on the highest ethics of Equality, Freedom and Justice.

The Bahais give great importance to social service in religious life. The Bahai Temple is a Universal House of Worship. It is not only a House of Worship. Service-centres—libraries, schools, hospitals, asylums, widows' homes, signifying the necessity of man to worship God by serving his fellow men—are invariably attached to the Temple. This is a good movement and in the right direction. The spirit is worthy of emulation.

The followers of Baha-u-llah claim that, as Christ was proclaimed as a prophet 300 years after his crucifixion, Baha-u-llah would also be acclaimed by the world as the last and the best of its prophets, as one who has combined in his creed the teachings of all the prophets who preceded him, and given a unifying stamp and colour, so necessary to suit the changing times. At least the sky signs are clear. We want not only a League of Nations of the world but a League of the Religions of the world for harmonising and solidifying the vital spiritual interests of all mankind. Is it not said in the *Bible*:

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for all to dwell on the face of the earth. We are the offspring of God." (*Bible*, XVII, 24, 26, 29.)

Religion, as we know, should be a unifying force, not a dividing factor; a harmonising influence, not a disruptive agent; a cogent reason for blending divergent interests into a harmonious whole, not a vortex of conflicts and discord.

Religion has been the seed of much altruism. It has created homes and hospitals for the poor and sick. It has founded schools, libraries and universities. But it has also been the cause of much unmitigated horror and suffering. Religious fanaticism is a dire disease. It has kindled fires and raised wars. It has devastated lands and stained civilization. Who does not know the story of the Inquisition? Who is not aware of the wholesale persecution, which was started when the great Persian Empire under Yezdegard III, the last of the Sasanian dynasty, was overrun by the Moslems and the great Zoroastrian race was converted by the sword into Islamic faith except a few brave souls who sought refuge in mountain fastnesses or foreign lands including some who left Iran and came to India where they found a hospitable home on the shores of Kathiawar? When the prophets preached their religions they never meant that their message of goodwill should be so horribly mutilated and made the means of creating and spreading anarchy and misery.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Jesus Christ, is the teaching of the Christian Scriptures. And yet while Christ preaches love and nothing but love — Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God — Europe has not been without wars of the most venomous and destructive nature.

Every religion has its excellences. Each is a path that leads to the same summit. The branches are many, but the root is the same. The rivers are many, but they flow into the ocean. The Theosophists deserve credit for stimulating a scientific study of the religions of the world with a view to focusing attention on the fundamentals in which there is such a great unanimity of thought.

It is difficult to say whether Bahaullah's prophecy of one world religion one language one culture one civilization would be fulfilled. Swami Vivekananda though a singer a sage and missionary does not concur with the idea of a universal religion. To him it is an absurdity an impossibility. God a unity is manifested in diversity. He says that if the teachings of the various religions are rightly grasped there should not be only enough spirit of tolerance but a firm conviction that all religions—Hinduism Zoroastrianism Christianity Islam Buddhism Confucianism Sikhism Jainism Judaism Laotism Shintoism are alike and each religion has to play an important role in the economy of human life. If there was unanimity life would be reduced to a hum drum monotony. It is divergence of thought that stimulates interest in life and gives to human activity a varied colour and charm. If all began to think and worship God in the same way Swami Vivekananda contends there would then be no freshness of any new thought and men would begin to vegetate. Life would be like a mummy in an Egyptian museum.

Says Shankaracharya The soul hath no caste neither any creed. It is one with the Universal Life. God is One. The Universe is His body. One Universal Life pervades throughout nature. Not conquest over nature but kinship with nature is the true teaching. Harmoniousness of each individual part with the whole—that is the substratum of the *Vedantic* philosophy. It matters very little therefore it is contended whether God is reached through one Path or many Paths. In fact God *manifests Himself in diversity* and this multiplicity should be maintained provided the unity in the multiplicity is kept in view.

There are therefore two schools of progressive thought. One teaches that, as every religion in its essentials is the same, no one should take pride and say that his or her religion is the best. Each should exercise tolerance, forbearance, love and admiration for the other man's religion which is as good as his own and which is enough to take him to God or give him salvation. Swami Vivekananda belongs to this school.

The other school establishes the fact that as the world has become a smaller and smaller unit, the diversity of clashing thoughts eventually must give way to a cohesion of ideas and feelings. A world civilization and a universal religion are unavoidable, concomitant factors.

There are three parts in every religion. The first and most important is philosophy, the second is mythology and the third rituals, dogmas, forms and ceremonies. It should be apparent to any one that the second and third part of religion *viz.*, mythology and rituals form only the husk of a religion and not the kernel. But unfortunately they have a great fascination for the majority of the people and so long as this fascination continues, whether rightly or wrongly, no religion can become universal.

The impediments to the concept of a universal religion are the unessential parts of religion, *viz.*, mythology and rituals. They vary in different religions. They form the dividing wall. What is an object of great devotion to a Hindu is a *nostrum* to a non-Hindu. The phallus symbol, for instance, is held in great reverence by the Hindus, but it is looked upon quite naturally by the non-Hindus with contempt and disgust. The sacrament of the Christians is a holy thing to them, but the non-Christians consider it as cannibalism. The Zoroastrians,

consider bullock's urine as an emblem of purity, but the non-Parsis naturally look upon it with derision.

Rituals and ceremonies, forms and creeds vary in all religions and though, we know, they are not quite necessary, they are still a means of satisfying people, hungering for spiritual food, according to their temperament. The emotional man tries to seek God by means of rituals, creeds, ceremonies and forms. It is the intellectual man alone who discards these forms and rises to a higher level. There are various stages of human development and religion has to satisfy the longings of the human soul, according to the mental and spiritual development of each individual.

"However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine," says the *Bhagavad-Gita*, (IV, 10)

Man is an animal in the first place and lives by instinct. He becomes human as he develops and uses reason. When he rises to the highest stage and becomes perfect he lives by inspiration. What is felt and seen by inspiration is never contradicted by reason. Inspiration is the highest mental instrument for seeing God and His Divine Plan.

Religion teaches how to transcend the limitations of the senses. There is an inner urge in every man to know what God is, what the Universe is and what his relationship with the Universe is. No man can live without religion. It is the greatest living force. But when religion is degenerated into priestcraft the essentials are forgotten and they are replaced by mere rituals and forms. The most urgent necessity therefore is to lay emphasis upon the essential part of each religion.

The best way is to begin with a rational study of one's own religion and then extend it to other religions.

We shall now attempt to show in detail the basis of essential unity in all religions of the world. The barriers between science and science; science and religion and religion and religion are to be broken and removed. The process has begun. It is being slowly recognised that sciences are not many but that Science is one. In the same way, it can be demonstrated that there are not many religions but that Religion is one. The same laws are applicable both in the domain of Matter and Spirit. In fact, Matter dwindles into Spirit and it is Spirit that is the controlling factor in the universe. What is the universe? It is a Great Thought, not a machine. It is a spiritual entity. Truth is one and eternal. Religion and Science are the two windows through which we look at this great body of Truth. They are two parallel avenues leading to the knowledge of God. If we spiritualise Science and rationalise Religion, we come to the essential conclusion of One Religion for the whole human race.

The movements of the world show a tendency towards cohesion in all spheres of human activity. There is evidently the spirit of grouping or massing together for a common cause. We see signs not only of internationalism, but of humanism, inter-religionism. Take the instance of labour. Labour Unions are now on a world-wide basis. Labour working in imperialistic England has not only sympathy for, but is in active and very close touch with, its compatriots in Soviet Russia and other countries of the world. Karl Marx's slogan "Workers of the world, unite", has had a vivifying influence upon the masses who no longer are content.

to live a life of dumb-driven cattle but are awake and eager for their rightful place in human society. Once therefore the essential teachings of all the living religions of the world become known to every one the narrow racial groupings will have to give way and the people will begin to feel their homogeneity and, be they Hindus or Moslems, Christians or Jews, Zoroastrians or Jains, Buddhists or Sikhs, they will feel the common impulse of a common tie binding them all together for a higher purpose in life.

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the talented Diwan of Travancore, has written a small book, called *World Religions*. It is a study in Synthesis. He urges for a synthetic study of all the living religions because he feels that in such a study, we can comprehend "the unity and harmony of all the quests on which the human soul has been bent, understanding that the great Prophets and Seers have all seen the truth, though in different forms and in different moods." What the world wants to-day is a synthesis of Philosophy, Science and Religion. Viscount H. Samuel, President of the British Institute of Philosophy, delivering a lecture at Allahabad, at the University Building in 1938 said, "Bernard Shaw has declared that civilization needs Religion as a matter of life and death."

We all recognise that the mind of man, in our times is confused. The present generation is beset by anxieties and perils. Our escape, our refuge, from these depends upon our finding a new synthesis between Philosophy, Science and Religion. Philosophy, coming out of its phase of materialism, and Religion, freeing itself from its servitude to dogmas that are outworn, may join in constructing a spiritual and intellectual framework for the future. These are wise words. The new world order which is on the lips of everyone to day will depend upon

the way the teachings of Religion, Science and Philosophy are fused together for the higher purpose of life. To speak in the words of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, what we need is "a reconciliation of bodily regimen with mental discipline and a spiritual evolution designed to produce an intrinsic and essential harmony within the macrocosm of human personality, whose objective is which is *Brahman* to reach and be absorbed in the microcosm or the Oversoul." Such is the goal of not only Hinduism, as the talented author wants to impress, but in fact of every religion, every science and every philosophy and it shall be the chief objective and basis of the new world order that is in the making.

It is not historically proved which is the oldest monotheistic religion of the world. Bhai Manilal C. Parekh in his book, *The Gospel of Zoroaster—The Iranian Veda*, pays homage to Zoroaster as the first Aryan Prophet, to whom God revealed Himself. He says "The call of Zoroaster as a Prophet has something singular about it, when viewed from the point of view of the History of Religion, as it has developed among the Aryan people. He is perhaps the only person among all the great Teachers and Seers of the Aryans who may be called the Prophet in the Hebrew sense of the term. The revelation that he received and the particular call that came to him—both these are very different from what we find in regard to such things in the *Upanishads*, for example. In these last the definite call to a person to act as a mouth piece of God, is entirely lacking and the nature and character of the revelation that came to the *Vedic* and the *Upanishadic* seers are of different type. He quotes various Western scholars to prove his statement. (Readers are referred to Chapter V of the book dealing with 'Zoroaster as a Prophet'.)

Zoroastrianism appears to be the oldest religion and scholars are of opinion that it "profoundly influenced all the great religions of the world." (Prof. Brownes's *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. I, page 102.) The *Gathas* of Zoroaster contain ethical concepts of universal application. It is not for us to advocate what religion or combination of what religions should form the basis of a universal religion. This is a matter which scholars and thinkers must eventually decide. The intrinsic worth and merit of every religion in the chronological order of its revelation require to be thoroughly gauged by a comparative study.

Prophets were sent at different times and in different climes not to start any new religion but to complete and supplement the work of their predecessors. Each religion sought to interpret Truth in its own fashion. It is therefore all the greater reason to get the whole aspect of Truth by studying the various philosophies of different scriptures for the discernment of common features.

According to the Theosophists, all religions are true at the source but they are all overlaid with corruption. Their origin is divine and each contains truth, no doubt. But it is the duty of the student to sift the chaff from the wheat and to find truth. If religions had no truth within them they would have died long ago. The very fact, that they have stood the test of the vicissitudes of time shows the intrinsic worth of all of them. From the Theosophical standpoint of view, the founders of religion were more Reformers than Prophets. They protested against the existence of falsehood, the vagaries of the so-called existing religions and showed to mankind "A Way of Life, a Way to Wisdom, a Way to Brotherhood."

"It is entirely untheosophical to say that all the Rishis and Prophets came out of Their Occult World of Light into our mortal world of darkness in order to establish a new religion. They came to restore the one Eternal Religion. Did Krishna come to establish a new religion? No. He came to restore the mighty art that was lost, an art which was already ancient in His ancient world of five thousand years ago. The *Gita* does not establish a new religion, it teaches the Way of Life', (*The Brotherhood of Religions* by Madame Sophia Wadia, page 6)

Madame Blavatsky in her epoch-making book, *Isis Unveiled*, also stresses the point, that the founders of religions were more Reformers than Prophets and the systems which they founded, were later on adulterated with the false teachings of the priests who called themselves as shepherds but who were really false guides. The following passage would be read with great interest 'Kapila Orpheus Pythagoras Plato, Basilides, Marcian, Ammonius and Plotinus founded schools and sowed the germs of many a noble thought and disappearing left behind them the refulgence of demi gods'. But the three personalities of Krishna Gautama (the Buddha) and Jesus appeared like true gods, each in his epoch and bequeathed to humanity, three religions built on the imperishable rock of ages. That all the three have in time become adulterated is no fault of the noble Reformers. It is the priestly self styled husbandmen of the 'vine of the Lord' who must be held to account by future generations. Purify the three systems of the dross of human dogmas, the pure essence remaining will be found to be identical "

(*Isis Unveiled* II, 536)

Rabindranath Tagore in his extremely beautiful address to the Parliament of Religions held at Calcutta,

in 1937, on the occasion of the birth centenary of Sri Ramakrishna, after describing what a liberating force religion was, deplored the attitude of the sectarians in converting it into a stifling prison-house. He said, with bitterness of feeling, "Built on the renunciation of its founder, it (religion) becomes a possessive institution in the hands of its priest and claiming it to be universal, becomes an active centre of schism and strife." He compared the religion, as preached and practised by the priestcraft, to "a sluggish stream, choked by rotting weeds" and "divided into shallow slimy pools that are active only in releasing deadly mists of stupefaction."

Madame Blavatsky's immortal work, *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877, is replete with profound thoughts on ancient religions. She has made explorations in the occult and psychic sciences and has paved the way to a comparative study of the religions of the world, particularly their occult teachings. Mrs. Annie Besant's scholarship in this field is of immeasurable worth. The Theosophists have rendered yeoman service by their correct attitude towards religion. They have proved, by a systematic and scientific study of all religions, what common truths are contained in them, which should bring all men and women of diverse races and creeds into one great Brotherhood and Sisterhood.

Is Theosophy a religion? The Theosophists describe "Theosophy" as "a Way of Life,—a dynamic and spiritual Way of Life." It is a Theosophical axiom: "A Theosophist is one who Theosophy does." And Theosophy teaches man, that he is a citizen of the world, that his soul has no sex, no caste, no colour, that he is a link in the universe, that it is his mission to help everyone in the evolution of life. Theosophy is Wisdom-Religion, Atma-

Buddhi Divine Wisdom Brahma-Vidyā Buddhi Dharma, Soul Science

Not only are there several religions but in each religion there are so many churches. The Christians have different churches—the Greek the Roman Catholic the Non Roman Catholic, the Protestant and so forth. The Hindus have their Shaivas Vaishnavas Shaktas and various other subsidiary sects. The Buddhists are divided into Mahayana and Hinayana and Northern and Southern Churches. The Mussalmans are divided into Shiah and Sunis.

Though divided into various sects and churches these religions have common fundamental teachings. Persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy Dayanand Sarasvati and Theosophists like Mrs Annie Besant and others have played a conspicuous part in making a comparative study of the various religions and have shown the common features in the essential teachings of the various prophets. The *Vedas* of the Hindus the *Zend Avesta* of the Parsis the *Tripitaka* of the Buddhists the *Books of the Law and the Prophets* of the Hebrews the *Bible* of the Christians the *Koran* and the *Hadis* of the Mussalmans—all contain the same fundamental spiritual truths. They speak of God His Unity and His Eternity. They speak of His manifestation in the Universe. They speak of the Hierarchies of Spiritual Beings. They speak of the basic laws of Causation and Effect. They speak of the value of Sacrifice Righteousness Love and Truth. They speak of the worlds beyond the physical world the Path of Evolution and the Great Brotherhood of Men. These are some of the essential traits on which there is unanimity of agreement in every religion.

God is the central theme of every religion. There is

no conception higher than God He is the only Reality He is the Lord of the Universe He is the Quickener, the Mover, the Creator, the Destroyer He is the ONE Spirit, that pervades throughout the universe By whatever name we invoke Him, God, Jehovah, *Ahura Mazda*, *Brahman*, *Allah*, He is the Supreme Self, ONE without a second, formless, colourless soundless, without beginning, without end, the only Truth, the Eternal Truth

"It is not non-existent, nor existent,
It is not thus, nor is it otherwise,
It takes not birth, nor grows, decays nor dies,
It has no stain to purify away,
It is the ever pure—such is the mark
Of That which hath no mark, the One Supreme.
It cannot be suppressed, nor yet expressed
It cannot die nor yet be brought to birth
Nor is it slayable nor everlasting,
It means not any onething nor yet many,
It cometh not, nor ever doth it go
Not being, nor non-being, nor yet both
Nor free from both! This wondrous Mystery,
Void of these four conditions, is the Truth
Which those that tread the Middle Path declare

(Bu, Nagarjuna, *Madhyamika Karika*)

The word 'Universe' is derived from Latin *Unus* (one) and *vertere* (to turn) i.e. that which revolves round the One It is the teaching of all religions that God is the Ultimate Reality behind the entire Creation, both visible and invisible The earth was created millions of years ago according to the story related in that most wonderful book, entitled *Oahspe* It is a story of heavenly revelation delivered to Man Man enquired, 'Who is this life? This Omnipresent that quickeneth into life all the living' and the following reply was given

"I AM LIFE! I AM THE I AM! I AM THE EVER-PRESENT! All that thou seest on earth or in heaven, and even the unseen worlds, also, are My very Person! I am the Whole!"

Zarthusra asked *Ahura Mazda*, "Tell me, Thou, O pure *Ahura Mazda*, the name which is the greatest, best, fairest and which is the most efficacious for prayer " And *Ahura Mazda* answered "My first name is *Ahmi* (I am)" and my twentieth name is *Ahmi Yad, Ahmi Mazdao* (I am that, I am *Mazda*) (Dr. Hauge's *Essays on the Religion of the Parsis*, page 195)

The Sanskrit equivalent for *Ahmi Yad Ahmi* is *Yoham Soham*, 'I am what I am', repeated by the Hindu devotee when he worships the OMNIPRESENT.

In the Bible the same significant phrase is used for God God said unto Moses, "I am that I am" The *Upanishads* also express the same thought "*Aham Brahmasmi, Yas tvam-asī Soham-asmi, Idam-sarvam-asī, Aham ev-edam Sarvam,—*' I am the Infinite, What thou art that same am I, Thou art all This, I am all This."

Buddha, when he arises from *samadhi* (trance), uses an identical expression

"He who successfully fulfils his vow
Of continence in body and in mind,
And has achieved the final knowledge he
Acquires the right, high *Brahma* to declare
To others who would walk the Path, he may
Give to himself the name of *Brahman* " (Udana).

God is perfect God is the essence of Purity The relationship between man and God is so tangible that the only way we can think of God is in the terms of an Ideal Person This aspect of a Personal God is treated in every religion

Prophets,—Zarthusra, Krishna, Buddha, Moses, Christ, Muhammad are the flowers of God's creation, perfect in the conception of the immortality of the soul and perfect in their conduct of life. Praise of the prophet is therefore one of the foremost teachings enjoined in the scriptures and *shastras* of every religion. This is another common link in all religions, *viz.*, deification of the founders, who are held as *Avatars*. Each one is God-incarnate-in-man, the embodiment of divine perfection, the Superman, the Great Exemplar. Krishna says in the *Gita* "Forsake all *dharma*s (ways and creeds), make Me alone thy way."

"I am the Father and the Fostering Nurse,
 Grandsire and Mother of the Universe,
 I am the *Vedas* and the Mystic word,
 The way, the support, the witness and the Lord,
 The Seed am I of deathless quickening power,
 The Home of all, the mighty Refuge tower."

The Hindus consider not only Krishna as God-incarnate-in-man, but Rama and Buddha also, though Buddha never declared himself as a prophet but called himself a preacher, who aimed at finding out the way for the annihilation of human misery and who has bequeathed to humanity the priceless knowledge of the mode of attaining *Nirvana*, through personal purification and abandonment of physical pleasures.

The Chinese deify their two great religious leaders, *viz.*, Confucius and Lao-tsze, as divine incarnations. Zarthusra is not "a man-prophet singer of the *Gathas*" but "a supernatural, semi-divine figure." Jesus, according to the Pauline doctrine, is also an *Avatara*. Such strange miraculous powers were attributed to Muhammad that when he died, we are told, that people, of whom Caliph

Omar was foremost, would not believe that such an incarnation of God could be subject to death. Such was the deification of the different races of their religious founders and in this they showed a common psychological trait. "The elaboration of these Great Exemplars, *Atatars* or Supermen, is but one of the forms in which the uniform psychological metabolism of the different races was manifesting itself."

The question that arises is whether such deification of the founders is justifiable. Has not this attitude caused religious jealousies and wars in the past? It is true. This division of people, according to different religious labels, Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Buddhists has done tremendous mischief. There is a significant passage in the book *Oahspe*, showing why religions have failed in establishing peace and goodwill on earth. Because the true significance of God, who is Love, Beauty, Truth, Tolerance, Compassion, Justice and Mercy is forgotten. Narrow interpretations of their own scriptures, without adequate understanding of the beauty and worth of the others' scriptures, is the prolific cause of schisms and enmities. They are not true worshippers of God, who make a fetish of their own dogmas and creeds. "O that I had remained faithful with Thee Jehovah! But I invented Gods unto the glory of the Evil One. In one place I called out to my sons and daughters, saying 'Be ye *Brahmins* *Brahma* saveth whosoever professeth his name' In another place I said 'By ye Buddhists Buddha saveth whosoever calleth on his name' In another place I said 'Be ye Christians Christ saveth whosoever calleth on his name' In another place I said, 'Be ye Mohammedans whosoever saith There is but one God and Muhammad is his prophet! shall have indulgence without sin'.

' Thus have I divided the earth, Oh Jehovah! Into four great idolatries have I founded them and into their hands put all manners of weapons of destruction and they are become more terrible against one another than are the beasts of the forest O that I could put away these great iniquities which I raised up as everlasting torments to the earth Verily, there is no salvation in any of these "

No fault lies with the basic teachings of any religion They are fundamentally the same But like patriotism, love for and belief in one's own religion is not enough It is erroneous to exalt one's own religion as the best Each child loves its own mother most and thinks that she is a perfect embodiment of love goodness and purity But do children force one another to accept their mothers as such? No Truths of all religions require to be studied, weighed and compared for the harmony and peace of the whole world.

All religions are united in the belief in one God Faith in perfect God is the teaching of all the scriptures and it runs like a golden thread in the necklace of pearls

God dwells in the temple of the heart He is the heart's desire of all He is the Ultimate Mystery This is the basic truth in all religions

Let us go now a step further What is the philosophy of life as we understand from the scriptures of the world? It is more or less the same *viz.*, that man is an exile from heaven and he has to return to his spiritual Homeland Every religion speaks of the immortality of the Soul

We have talked about *Karma* and the theory of Re-incarnation in a preceding chapter Birth and death are the inevitable consequences of the law of creation Death of the physical body is nothing but a birth of the *Atman*

in the other world Man is made of two parts—matter and Spirit Matter crumbles but the Spirit must ever remain unchanged As the voice of the Lord is unseen and potent so is there a Spirit in man unseen and potent, which shall never die but ascend in heaven to habitations prepared by the Lord

God made the greatest sacrifice when He limited Himself by manifesting the universe The whole process of creation is through the two arcs—the arc of descent and the arc of ascent Every religion teaches how after his descent man has to ascend the soul being immortal Every religion shows the upward path to Godhead

All religions speak of righteousness as the only way to bring man nearer to God All religions tackle the question of evil and how to overcome it The methods may be different but the ideal is the same *vis* to realise God who is the only Reality all else being shadowy and transitory Two entities hath thy Creator given thee, that which is flesh and that which is spirit The flesh shall desire earthly things but the Spirit shall desire heavenly things And so it is The Body is the Temple the Soul is the Builder and Knowledge is the implement which the Soul employs for the renovation of the Temple The Soul has no sex no creed no colour no bar It is of the immortal essence of God God created man that he may rise above the temptations of life and purified and cleansed through the furnace of sorrow and experience of the corporeal life may pass through the atmospherean and etherean worlds and finally become One with Him The Soul's path planned and chalked out by God is upwards not downwards It may take one birth ten births a hundred births a thousand births a cycle ten cycles or a hundred cycles of years for the

jñāna to ultimately attain its emancipation from the thralldom of physical life. It all depends upon the use a man makes of his Will. It all depends upon the way he makes use of his opportunities. It all depends upon his own individual efforts. *Mukti*, as Shri Krishna says, the Kingdom of Heaven, as Christ says, *Nirvana* as Buddha says, *Vahistam Manoh*, as Zoroaster says—this is the goal of life, which every religion preaches to man. **ONENESS WITH GOD**,—this is the teaching of every religion. That life is one and complete submergence into God, who alone is Reality, is the ultimate aim and destiny of man.

Says science, as the atom, so is the solar system. Says religion, as one, so all Man is a microcosm; the universe is the macrocosm. To know the least atom is to know the solar system. Each part is inseparably connected with the whole. "All men being one in Spirit, are brothers in flesh." "God is All." "All is I." He is the Whole. Anything else than God is nothing. This life is nothing. It is *Māyā*, as the *Vedas* teach. It is *Khayāl* or *Khawāb*; *Khuda* the thought or dream of God, as the *Sufis* teach. The *Bible* says life is 'vanity of vanities' and in the *Koran* it is described as *Hadisun Halikum*, *Batila* i.e. fleeting, perishing nullity. This is the teaching of all religions that there is nothing in life worth aspiring for except God, who is Everything.

'Men who are living here are in a dream.

And when they die then shall they be awake.

For all this world is a mere thought—the thought

Of Him who is the True, whose thought is Truth."

God is everything. This is the teaching of all religions. When man realizes that he is a part of God who pervades the entire universe, should he not love all? Through love and service man ascends to God. The part becomes—

the whole The individual becomes the universal The drop becomes the ocean The infinitesimal becomes the Infinite Through righteousness and love lies the way of the rise of the ego to the fulfilment of God's plan. Man becomes God

This then is another fundamental teaching of all religions, that not only God is One and He is the only Reality, but that all else is nothing Not mine, but Thine, not my will, but Thy will not egotism, but altruism not selfishness, but unselfishness not competition, but co-operation, not commercialism, but socialism not individuality, but universality, these are the watchwords of all religions Man has not to live in his individual capacity He has to live for all, feeling that everyone is his brother, be he fair or foul wise or foolish, learned or ignorant, rich or poor strong or weak 'None of us liveth unto himself, and no one dieth to himself,' says the *Bible* We are all so inter-connected that our own progress and salvation depend upon the good we do to others The refrain of the Buddhist's song is *Aum Mani Padme Hum* 'I am in thee and thou art in me' Only that which is good for everybody whatsoever can be good for one's own self " says the immortal *Gatha* (43, 1) What a sublime thought expressed in such a simple manner! In fact, Kant's whole philosophy of universalization of will or universal conscience is nothing but an echo of this supreme teaching of Zoroaster Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you ' is a good adage and one of the sayings of Muhammad is, No man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself ' The teaching of Christ, "Love thy neighbour as thyself, has the same categorical significance The *Gita* says

"Who feels as his own the joys and sorrows
Of others, he is the true yogi, he
Hath truly joined his own soul with all souls."

Thus, it will be observed that the teaching of Oneness of all life is common in all religions. Social service, philanthropic activity, charity, gentleness of manner and speech are enjoined in all religions for the simple reason that there is no separateness in the universe. There is One Life. The Arabic Persian word '*insan*' (man) means the friend of all; "the lover of his kind." The equivalent Sanskrit word is *arya* (from *ar*, to go). It means the person, to whom others go when in trouble for relief in their distress. The *Gita* says :

"Through all forms whatsoever runs One Life,
Immortal, making indivisible
All those that seem divided endlessly
The higher *sattvic* wisdom seeth thus."
"He who is worthy to go to for help
Of persons in distress, and unto whom
Such ever do resort true *Arya*, he."

What is religion, if not social service? Swami Vivekananda used to say, of what avail was it if it did not wipe the widow's tears or fill the empty stomach of the orphan? The Theosophists have a high ideal of service. He is not a Theosophist who does not practise altruism, who does not share his bed or coat with one who has no bedding, no clothing; who does not defend another, when he is slandered; who does not succour him, when he is in distress or trouble. Universal brotherhood is the teaching of every religion, if by religion is meant its essential teachings.

"A good life is a rich life," is an axiomatic truth. Every religion places before man a high code of ethics

for the formation of his character, which is the most important thing in life. The Law of Evolution is the Law of God. Man has to progress in consonance with this Great Law, which is irrevocable, irrefutable, all-comprehensive and just. Just as science lays down certain laws, which are the result of man's experimentation and experience, the prophets and seers have declared Laws of the Universe, which are the result of their larger vision and which are as irrefutable and unchallengable as the laws of Science. They are to be obeyed and followed.

The ethical teachings of various religions show a remarkable similarity. Zoroastrianism lays the greatest stress on *Asha*. It means Purity, Truth, Law, Order, Good Works and Good Advancement.

' Aero pantao so Ashatie

Vispe anyesham e pantam '

'There is but one Straight Path to Right

All other ways are no ways '

This is the Law of Righteousness. The conception of righteousness may vary in different religions. But the basic idea, that Truth only matters and nothing else, is recognised in all religions. It is the first attribute of God. Zarthustra says in his *Gathas* that *Ahura Mazda* created the Universe through His *Vohu Mano* i.e., His Best Thought or Best Mind and He rules it by *Asha*, the Law of Evolution.

Thou too the Loving One who for
Our Good,—evolved out of the Grace of Thy Good
Mind

This joy-creating Universe

(*Yasna*, 47, 3)

In Thy Just Rule dost Thou as 'twere

Live with *Asha*, Thy Law, and *Vohu-mano*, Good Mind.

(*Yasna*, 44, 9)

(Lady Dustoor's *Interpretation of Zarthustra's Gathas*)

Zoroastrianism in its code of ethics gives the first place to Righteousness. Hinduism places importance on *Dharma*. Duty is the basis of the welfare of the whole fabric of society. It is only the sense of duty that coalesces an individual to contribute to, the well-being of society, as a whole. Right thought and right emotion are the prerequisites in the performance of duty. Duty, broadbased on unselfishness and tolerance, creates an atmosphere of loving comradeship. It eschews the jarring elements of jealousy, disharmony, discord and sorrow. It is a harbinger of peace and amity. It leads to the hall of beauty and sunshine.

Duty, based on right emotion, is given the place of prime importance in the Hindu scriptures because it covers, as a matter of fact, a whole range of other virtues. Duty is that which is due from each to each. And if only each did his duty to the other, taking every one as his own relation, whether man, beast, bird, fish or even the worm crawling on the ground, there should be established a reign of universal peace, love and harmony, which is the objective of every religion.

In Christianity, the greatest importance is placed on Love. It is its basic teaching. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is Christ's commandment. Love is unifying. It is a dissolvent of hatreds, remover of communal, national and racial barriers. "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also them likewise."

(*St. Luke*, VI, 31.)

The main teaching in Buddhism is Annihilation of Evil in man. This evil has its root in "I." Egotism is the prolific source of all the mischief in life. It means separateness, narrowness, selfishness, diseased affections, bodily attachments, impurity, greed, love of ostentation, wealth and power.

Buddhism is a negative philosophy, no doubt for it lays greater stress upon the avoidance of evil rather than upon the practice of positive virtues. But there is no doubt that by negation of evil we come to the practice of righteousness and *Nirvana* is attained when all evil in thought, word and deed is completely eschewed.

Buddha's conception does not vary materially from that of any other founder of religion. He exhorts every one to live normally according to the Norm of the Universe to make the pattern of the wheel of his life in accordance with the pattern of the Universal Wheel. Greatest stress is laid by Buddha on self exertion and self purification, which alone can give to man the coveted prize of *Nirvana*.

"Therefore, O Ananda be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves.

"And whosoever Ananda either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves and refuge unto themselves shall betake themselves to no external refuge but holding fast as their refuge to the truth, shall look not for refuge to anyone besides themselves—it is they Ananda among my *Bhikkhus* who shall reach the very topmost height—but they must be anxious to learn."

(*Maha-Parinibbanna Sutta*, II, 33, 35)

'What is the key to Heaven?' Muhammad was asked and he replied, 'The key to Heaven is to testify to the Truth of God and to do good work' Islam's great teaching is that of brotherhood of man Purity of speech and charity form the nucleus of Islamic faith What is Islam?' once Lord Muhammad was asked He said 'Purity of speech and charity'

Every religion speaks of Truth as the foundation of God's Kingdom Truth is man's greatest glory It is his greatest wisdom "As through wisdom is created the world of righteousness, through wisdom is subjugated every evil and through wisdom is perfected every good"

(*Dadistan-i Dini* IV, 6)

According to Hinduism 'Truth is the eternal Brahman every thing rests on Truth'

(*Mahabharata*)

The Jewish scriptures speak of God as Lord of Truth 'He is the Rock His work is perfect for all His ways are judgment a God of Truth and without iniquity, just and right is He'

(*Deuteronomy* XXXII 4)

The Christian Scriptures abound in reference to God as Truth 'When He the Spirit of Truth is come He will guide you into all truth'

(*St John* XVI 13)

'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'

(*St John* VIII 32)

Jesus saith unto him I am the way, the Truth and the Life'

'Clothe not the truth with vanity, neither conceal the truth against your own knowledge' says the

(*Koran* (II 41))

"Thy law is the truth," sings the Psalmist.

(*Psalm, CXIX, 142.*)

"They who know Truth in truth and Untruth in untruth, arrive at Truth and follow true desires," says the Buddha. "There is no religion higher than Truth," says the Theosophist.

The philosophy of every religion is that right is rewarded and wrong is punished. In no religion is it so emphatically laid down as in Zoroastrianism. The word that is used for the formation of character in the Avestan literature is *Daena*, which also means faith, i.e., seeing with Mind's eye. There is a beautiful allegory in the Zoroastrian scriptures. When a man dies he reaches the *Chinvat* Bridge or the Bridge of Longing, where he meets a beautiful damsel or an ugly hag, to take him to heaven or hell, according to his good or bad actions in life. If the good exceeds the bad the bridge becomes broad, leading to the palace of heaven. If the record is bad, showing an excess of evil over good, it becomes as narrow and sharp as the edge of a razor and the victim falls down into the dark abyss of hell.

The conception of good and evil in Zoroastrian litany takes such a predominant form that the whole world is divided, as it were, into the Kingdom of Light, which is righteousness, and the Kingdom of Darkness, which is evil. All good people, animals which help men, trees and plants that are beneficial for the weal and welfare of men, comprise the Kingdom of Light. Those who are evil-minded and the animals and plants that are noxious and poisonous and harmful to human society, comprise the Kingdom of Darkness. The world is a stage where the eternal fight between good and evil takes place.

There is the same ethical teaching of resistance to evil in the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Shri Krishna asks Arjuna to fight even against friends and relations for the sake of righteousness and truth. It is a *Dharma-Yuddha*, a Righteous War.

According to Zoroastrian scriptures the two opposing forces are Good and Evil. In the *Gita* the words used are Freedom and Bondage. The divine properties, that give freedom to the soul are mentioned as fearlessness, wisdom, self-restraint, sacrifice, study of scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, non violence, truth absence of anger, renunciation charity, purity, modesty, forgiveness, compassion and fortitude. The demoniacal properties that lead to bondage, are hypocrisy, lust wickedness, arrogance, conceit greed, anger, violence untruth, unwisdom and so forth. "The Divine quality is for salvation and Satanic property is for bondage. There are two creations in this world, Divine and Satanic. Know Matter and Spirit, the two beginningless, and know all the changes as born of matter and qualities."

As in the *gathas*, the *Gita* also makes a mention of the two paths, *vis*, of Light and Darkness. "Light and Darkness—these are thought to be the world's everlasting paths. By the one he goeth who returneth not by the other he goeth who returneth again." (*Gita*, VIII 26)

The intrinsic teaching of Buddhism is, "As you sow, so shall you reap." The two principles enunciated by Buddha to attain *Nirvana* are (a) avoid evil and (b) do good. Self conquest is the greatest achievement.

"If a man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men and if another conquer himself, he (the latter) is the greatest of conquerors. One's own self conquered is better than all other people,

not even a God, a *Gandharva*, not *Mara* with *Brahman*, could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself and always lives under restraint." (*Dhammapada*, VIII 104 & 108)

"The virtuous man is happy in this world and he is happy in the next, he is happy in both. He is happy when he thinks of the good he has done he is still more happy when going on the good path."

(*Dhammapada*, I, 18)

The following in the *Bible* beautifully epitomises the whole truth "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

The paths pointed out by various religions may be somewhat different,—some believe in action above everything others believe in mere devotion and self-effacement, but the objective of every religion is to show the way of Wisdom.

Manu is considered by the Hindus as their greatest law-giver. His commandments correspond with the five *Yamas* of *Yoga*, which are *Ahimsa*, harmlessness, *Satyam*, truth, *Asteyam*, honesty, *Shaucham*, cleanliness, and *Indrya-nigraha*, restraint of senses from all erring ways.

The five cardinal virtues preached by Buddha are *Pan-a-tipata-veramani*, *Musa-vada veramani*, *Adinn-adana-veramani*, *Sura-meraya-majja-pamada-tihana-veramani*, *Kamesu michchha-chara-veramani*. These are rendered in immortal verse by Sir Edwin Arnold, as under

1. "Kill not—for Pity's sake—and lest ye slay
The meanest thing upon its upward way
- 2 Give freely and receive but take from none
By greed or force, or fraud, what is his own.
- 3 Bear not false witness, slander not, nor lie,
Truth is the speech of inward purity.

4. Shun drugs and drinks which work the wit
abuse,
Clear minds, clear bodies need no Soma juice
5. Touch not thy neighbour's wife, neither
commit
Sins of the flesh unlawful and unfit "

(*Light of Asia*, pages 152 & 153)

The Jains' code of ethics is framed both for the householder and the *sanyasin*. The path of duty or *dharma* consists of three important elements, the three jewels, *ratnatraya*, viz., right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. The most significant teaching in the Jain ethics is humility. There are eight types of arrogance which have to be conquered. They are "Don't be arrogant because you are very intelligent. Don't be arrogant that you are able to conduct a grand type of temple worship. Don't be haughty because of your noble family. Don't be conceited because of your cast. Don't be conceited because of your physical or mental strength. Don't be haughty because of your magical powers. Don't be conceited because of your *tapas* or *yoga*. Don't be conceited because of the beauty of your person."

(*The Cultural Heritage Of India*, Vol I, page 214)

The ten commandments of God given to Moses and His chosen People on Mount Sinai form an important teaching in the Hebrew scriptures. "Keep My Commandments and do them. I am the Lord." (*Lev*, 22-31.)

The ten commandments are

1. I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing nor the likeness of anything thou shalt not adore them nor serve them.

II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

III. Remember that thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day.

IV. Honour thy father and thy mother that thou mayst be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

V. Thou shalt not kill

VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VII. Thou shalt not steal.

VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

IX. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods.

Christ repeats the above commandments of Moses but with many additions.

The Sermon on the Mount is a matchless gem of wisdom. It should be the lodestar of every man who works in the daily workshop of life. It is too long to be reproduced here, but it is so well known that it hardly needs reproduction. It not only speaks of the necessity of love and righteousness, but gives an insight into occult knowledge.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes."

"Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who enter by it. Narrow is the gate and strait is the way which leadeth to life, and few there are who find it."

The commandments preached in the *Bible* find an echo in the *Koran*

' Slay none God had forbidden it except
Justice require it And avoid false words.
Woman and Man who steal lose their hands
Intoxicants are Satan's own device
They who avoid unlawfulness in sex,
And watchfully and resolutely control
Their senses, they alone achieve success '

(*Koran*)

Every religion is the result of God's revelation to man When the source of the fountain of inspiration is the same is it not natural that religions should indicate common features of agreement in their essential teachings?

Zoroastrianism Judaism Islam and even Christianity are considered as optimistic religions They teach people to live in the world not to shun it They exhort activity, not passivity. It is contended, however, that some religions like Hinduism and Buddhism particularly enjoin asceticism and renunciation which entail seclusion and aloofness thus debarring man from making any useful contribution towards the weal and welfare of his fellow-beings We have already dealt with this subject in our chapters on *Yoga* and *Renunciation* Religion has to be all embracing in its method of teaching so as to approach every class of people according to its temperament and development. Some evolve quickly others take a long time Every one has to go through different experiences It is therefore that religious ethics has to take into consideration two classes of people the slow going masses and those eager for rapid evolution The former form the bulk of society Extreme renunciation or a life of austerity

and poverty cannot be expected of them. The teachings of religion should be such as to influence a man in leading a good, moral life, attending to his daily round of duties and making sacrifices which are within his capacity. But for those who are wholehearted seekers after God, such ordinary teachings of religion are not enough. They crave for occult knowledge. They hunger for God-consciousness. And this can only be satisfied by a life of extreme renunciation and abstinence, with poverty as a pledge and celibacy as a bride. Christ says, "If thou wilt be perfect, give what thou hast to the poor and follow Me." It is the famous saying of Muhammad, *Al-fuqro fakhru*, "Pride do I take in utmost poverty." Patanjali speaks of *yamas* and *niyamas* in his *Yoga Sutras*.

There is no doubt that the discoveries made by scientists have laid mankind under a debt of gratitude. But complete annihilation of self by a life of austerity and renunciation brings the union of self with the Universal Self, the individual ego becomes the Universal Ego, *Khuda* becomes *Khuda*. Can anything be grander? The path of complete surrender to God and renunciation is the surest way to reach God. The apostles of Christ provided "neither gold nor silver, nor brass in their purses." And is it not stated of Christ, that he did not know where to lay his head? The seeker after God knows that he has to renounce everything that pertains to this finite world,—the ties of blood, wealth, power, fame and name, and attain perfect control over his senses for it is only through such means that he will be able to gain Eternity.

The Bible says "You cannot serve God and Mammon both." And furthermore, it is said in the same scripture, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the

Father is not in him For all that is in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world And the world passeth away and the lust thereof but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever (Bible St John)

The innate craving of the soul is for immortality not wealth A rich Marwari came to Shri Ramakrishna to pay his homage to him He saw a soiled coverlet on the saint's bed Moved with thoughts of altruism he offered to deposit a certain sum in a bank to enable Shri Ramakrishna to spend money on such household refinements as may be necessary Shri Ramakrishna asked him with folded hands to desist from making any such offer But he did not give in He approached others in the house and pleaded that it should be accepted in the name of the Holy Mother It was then that Shri Ramakrishna cried out in anguish Mother why dost thou bring such people here who want to estrange me from Thee?

Referring to this incident Shri Ramakrishna said that he felt that somebody was sawing through his skull when the offer of money was made

When Swami Vivekananda went to America and Europe it was immediately discovered that he was a man of towering intellect and he was lionised Large purses were offered to him and this he dreaded the most He would not touch any money What has a monk to do with money unless to send it to an *asrama* or an orphanage which needed such succour?

It is true that asceticism is not taught in Islam or Zoroastrianism These religions do not inculcate the teachings of monasticism and nunnery even for the most advanced devotees of God If Bolshevism in Soviet Russia raised its head against religion and called it opiate it

was to assert man's individual right to perfect economic equality and, in a sense, their revolution against religion was a religion in itself

It is when religion is not understood in its essence and is invaded by false practices and teachings of the priestcraft that it not only deteriorates but creates difficult situations in the world. If Marx was tempted to destroy religion he had a justifiable excuse for it. He wanted to establish a society without classes, a government wherein the distinctions of man and man disappeared, where there was no inequality, no injustice, no discontent. This Marxian teaching is not anti-religious at all, as it would appear at first sight. It is based on altruism and religion is nothing, if not altruism. Marxism is not anti-religion. It is reform of religion, if we see the spirit underlying its teaching. Religion teaches self denial as man a best means of achieving salvation. Marxism insists upon a classless society, based on the firm rock of equality of rights for all and equality of means of livelihood for all. We are reminded of the indignation of Swami Vivekananda when he said that it was an insult to a starving people to offer them religion instead of bread, an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics.

The Lord's prayer says, 'O God, give us our daily bread.' Every one of us is taught by religion to work for daily bread, not to hoard for future exigencies. God makes provision for the fishes of the water, the birds of the air, and the four-footed creatures that roam in the forest. Will he not also provide for man who is the crown of His Creation? Why should he then hoard? Why should he exploit and obtain riches? Is it not said in the *Bible*, 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the gates of

Heaven?" The extreme inequalities of life are a source of great social degradation. The poor get no opportunity to rise to their full spiritual stature, as they are exposed daily for want of bread and raiment and to all sorts of vices. And the rich sink lower into the pit of immorality, for wealth, if not shared with others, must corrupt the soul.

There should be no conflict between religion and economics. Man is an economic animal. His necessary bodily wants have to be satisfied. But to allow him to become a money making machine, which is the tendency of the present materialist age, is irreligious. Any revolt against such a tendency is in itself a religion. Socialism is based on ethical principles, preached in every religion. It helps to develop man's spiritual aspiration which is his greatest wealth.

Every religion lays great stress on the virtue of charity. Islam exhorts people to give in charity. We give below a few quotations from the holy *Koran* and *The Sayings of Muhammad*.

"Ye cannot attain to righteousness until ye expend in alms of what ye love. But what ye expend in alms that God knows." (*Koran* III, 87)

"The person who relieveth a *Mu'min* from distress in this world God will in the like manner, relieve him in the next and he who shall do good to the indigent, God will do good to him in this world and the next."

(*The Sayings of Muhammad* Page 12)

"Alms giving is a duty unto you. Alms should be taken from the rich and returned to the poor."

(*The Sayings of Muhammad* Page 28)

Christ's religion is saturated with the teachings of love and charity. The following are some quotations from the *Bible*

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away."

(*St Mathew*, V, 42)

"When thou makest a dinner or a supper call not the friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbours lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

(*St Luke*, XIV, 12-14.)

Charity in the shape of compassion to the weak and the needy, both men and beasts, is enjoined in the Hindu *Shastras* We give below a couple of quotations from their scriptures

"That alms, given to one who does nothing in return, believing that a gift ought to be made, in a fit place and time, to a worthy person, that alms is accounted pure." (*The Bhagavad Gita*, XVII, 20)

"He that is exceedingly good and is endued with humility does not neglect even the slightest suffering of any creature (without) an attempt at alleviating it.

(*Mahabharata Udyoga Parva*, 10)

The Parsis are considered to be the most charitable people in the world Their charities are not confined to their own community only Their outlook being liberal, Parsi charity is chiefly cosmopolitan in character We give below a few quotations from *Dinkard*

"The prosperous wealthy man is one whose thoughts are those of a servant of God,.....who is charitable to those in distress."

(*Dinkard*, VII, 479.)

"An exalted final life is through charity, and charity is for an exalted final life."

(*Dinkard*, VII, 458.)

"In like manner one should be charitable to the poor of superior worth, who are without proper sustenance. People of evil religions, who may be in danger of suffering from hunger, thirst, and cold, should be saved from these (hardships). Also Margazain sinners (*i.e.*, those deserving of capital punishment) should be protected. As far as possible one should not partake of food till after feeding the needy,"

(*Dinkard*, IX, 638.)

The duty of giving money in charity is recognised in the Hebrew Scriptures also. The following quotations have a human appeal:

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."

(*Psalms*, I, XI, I.)

"The righteous considereth the cause of the poor; but the wicked regardeth not to know it..... He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at length."

(*Proverbs*, XXIX. 7, 21.)

"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widows."

(*Isaiah*, I, 17.)

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen to loose the hands of wickedness, to undo the heavy

burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out of thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

(*Isaiah*, LVII, 6, 7)

The Buddhists' scriptures enjoin patience, pleasant speech, charitable disposition humility and kindness as will be seen from the following passages quoted

"May I be thoroughly imbued with benevolence and show always a charitable disposition, till such time as this heart shall cease to beat"

(*Fo sho hing tsan king* V, 532)

"The wise who are charitable and who observe the other moral precepts acquire by the merit of charity endless happiness in this world and in the other"

(*Udanavarga* VI 4)

(The above quotations from different scriptures are taken from Mrs Annie Besant's *The Universal Text Book*, Part II—Ethics)

All religions speak in praise of love They deprecate hatred If we were to analyse the whole range of virtues and vices, we can trace their parentage to love and hatred respectively

Love stands for God Happiness Heaven It is the parent of the following virtues Honour, Sincerity Magnanimity Generosity, Charity, Hospitality Tolerance, Urbanity Trustworthiness Sacrifice Forgiveness Gentleness, Humility Devotion, Considerateness Kindness, Uprightness Honesty, Fidelity, Straightforwardness,

loveth, He chasteneth." There is nothing to fear in this life. There is no burden that is so great as cannot be borne. Truth is the greatest weapon. Deceit and cunning, falsehood and villainy are the coward's tools, which hurt and harm those who handle them. Ignorance is the worst enemy. From darkness into light, from selfishness to unselfishness, from finite to infinite, from life to eternity—this is the way, the *dharma marga*, which the scriptures of the world speak of. Man the exile from the Spirit Land, returns back to his God, his Creator. Divine Unity is the keynote of all religions.

The path of progress for man has been so definitely chalked out, that come what may, the goal, though distant, is within the reach of every one. The Buddhists call this goal *Nirvana*. Not one life but many lives, may be required to attain the end. *Karma* is a combination of fate and free will. Work out your *Karma*, by acts of constant piety and unselfishness, duty and penance and the ship of the soul, instead of continuously tossing on the sea of life would enter the heaven of eternal rest and peace.

We rise step by step. This is the law of evolution. The heavenly hierarchies under the control of God, guide us at every turn into the higher regions of development. When we are on the *Nivritti Marga* (The Path of Return) the evolution becomes faster. The initiate becomes an adept. The adept becomes a *Rishi*. The *Rishi* becomes a *Maharishi*. 'Man is a Logos in gestation'. 'The pilgrim of an inward Odyssey' marches along the road till he reaches the final destination,—God.

ONENESS WITH GOD is the primal teaching of all religions. Christ says, "I and my Father are one." The same thought is expressed by the immortal words

"So'ham" in the Hindu scriptures. As Leadbeater says in his book, *The Inner Life*, "Man must gradually enlarge the self of which he thinks" (page 86) His first impulse is to love and protect the members of his family. He then thinks of the city, the community, the country in which he is born. As he grows in spirituality he discards the communal and national bonds and begins to love humanity as a whole. Nay, as his vision becomes deeper, he realizes that "he is not the physical body". He also understands that "he is not his feelings and further on still, that he is not even his mind". He is an ego, a soul, which is but a part and parcel of the greater Soul. He realizes that there is no barrier, but ONE Transcendent Unity.

The word *Nirvana* used by Buddha, has given rise to much misunderstanding. Even such a great scholar of Eastern Religions, as Max Muller, mistook it for annihilation. It means annihilation certainly, but only of the lower self. In the truest sense of the word *Nirvana* means an exquisite state of bliss, difficult to describe. Many have attempted to define it but the best definition is, peace in omniscience. Buddha himself once said "*Nirvana* is not being but also it is not non being". *Nirvana* is the extinction of individuality into divinity,—Uniting of Man with God.

Sacrifice is enjoined in all religions, but certainly not sacrifice of innocent animals to appease the wrath of the gods or to curry their favour. It is a most foolish and erroneous thought indulged in by the ignorant. No true religion has ever sanctioned or can ever justify slaughter of innocent animals. The thought itself is so abhorrent! What is meant by sacrifice? The word sacrifice in English, etymologically means, "good deed". The equivalent

of sacrifice in the Arabic language is *Qurbani*. It means that which brings the human soul *qurb* (near) to God. The Sanskrit word for sacrifice is *balī-dana*. *Balī* means giving, giving new life, vivifying, giving up one's self to God or to the service of God by the service of fellow creatures. *Balī dana* means self offering to God. Mahatma Gandhi's daily life is a lesson in sacrifice. So is the life of our friend, Jamshed Nusserwanji, to whom we have dedicated this book.

Sacrifice means extinguishing the soul's separate existence. It is "the dew-drop slipping into the shining sea." Sacrifice is spiritual freedom.

The great Sufi, Hazrat Inayat, was a musician in every sense of the word. Music was his religion. He was a music intoxicated man. He sought the perfection of God through music. During one of his journeys he lost all the medals and decorations which the appreciating world had bestowed upon him in recognition of his gift for music. It was a great loss but it made him a different man. A wave of spirituality came over him. He realized that if he truly loved God he must sacrifice that which was dearest to him. He gave up music. He became a mystic preacher. He took to the study of religions. Music had taught him the symphony of life. Instead of tuning musical instruments he became a tuner of human souls.

Love of God is the highest ideal. As one writer says, "God is love in essence. Love is God in solution." The ideal of all religions and philosophies is the union of all who love in the service of all who suffer. Man craves for immortality. But for this spiritual bread his hunger would not be satisfied. God is the Power that helps man in his struggle, and the more he seeks Him in the silence of his heart by prayers and meditation the nearer he approaches Him and the greater is he strengthened.

duce self magnetisation and this causes ecstasy. This is quite common in meditation

Just as the body and the mind are developed by physical and mental exercises spiritual development depends upon the exercises of the soul. The chief exercise of the soul is prayer. It makes the soul dynamic. It stimulates it to philanthropic activity, which leads to higher evolution.

The object of prayer is communion with the Divine Life. It is immaterial whether we pray in Sanskrit, Avesta, Arabic, Hebrew, or the language of the *Bible*. The idea of prayer is to invoke vibrations, which are the real thing in the universe. They lead to God. The vibrations, caused by the sincerity and earnestness of prayer with the unselfish aim of doing good to others, are vital in effect. They not only vitalize the devotee, they create a halo of light and happiness in the Spirit Land. They bring to rest those restless spirits that thirst for liberation from the agony of helpless wanderings. Prayers offered with full comprehension of the meaning of the words spoken, in utter selflessness of spirit and sincerity, reach God. They open the various centres in the various bodies and vitalize them.

The science of spiritualism teaches us that man has several invisible bodies. The physical body has two centres, the centre for hunger and the centre for sex. The astral body has four centres,—the centre of will, the centre of feeling, the centre for hunger and the centre for sex. The mental body has three centres,—the centre of consciousness, the centre of intuition and the spirit centre. But the spirit body, which is the most important, has only one centre, *viz*, the soul or ego centre. The chief object of prayer and meditation is not to gain psychic

powers even for unselfish service, but to realize union with God through the control of the lower centres by the supreme soul centre.

Great importance is placed in Hindu religion on the efficacy of the *Gayatri mantra*. Whether it is a *mantra*, a hymn, an *Ashem Vohu* or a *Koranic* verse, whatever is offered to God, in utter simplicity, devoutness and warmth of heart and if that is backed up by deeds of altruism, which alone constitute portable wealth, the path to God is assured. And this is the teaching of every religion. The path of prayer leads to the House of God. How truly has Tennyson sung "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of"

Every Sunday the Christian Churches resound with the following prayer, that goes out from the millions of human throats and hearts

' Our Father which art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy kingdom come!
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses as we
Forgive them that trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation but
Deliver us from evil
For Thine is the kingdom
And the power,
And the glory,
For ever '
The following *Vedic* prayer is very inspiring

"Aum!

In the three worlds, planes states of consciousness,
Waking and Dreaming, and Deep Slumber too,

Father of all, may Thy Supernal Light
Inspire, illuminate, and guide our minds,
We owe them to that Radiance Divine!

Aum!

Aum!

Supreme Director! Lord of Warmth and Light,
Of Life and Consciousness, that knoweth all!
Guide us by the *Right path* to happiness!
And give us strength and will to war against
The sins that rage in us and lead astray!
We bow in reverence and prayer to thee!

Aum!

Aum!

Father Divine! all sins ward off from us,
And all auspicious virtues grant to us,

Aum!" (Vedas)

A true follower of Islam offers his *namaz* five times a day, as enjoined by his Prophet. There is no happier sight than that of a congregation of Moslems at the time of *namaz*. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the proud and the humble, the old and the young forget all differences and sink their souls and minds into the sublime thought of *Allah*, the Creator and the Ruler. Who rules all mankind in love and mercy.

'Praise to God Lord of the Worlds Merciful,
Compassionate King on the Judgment Day! Thee,
we worship and Thee we ask for help. Guide us
on the straight path—the path of those to whom
Thou art gracious with whom Thou art not angry,
and such as go not astray.'

(Koran Surah, 1, 1 to 7)

Ahuna and *Ashem Vohu* occur very often in the prayers offered by the Parsis. We have already explained the significance and meaning of these short but most essential terms in the foregoing chapters.

The following is a very simple translation of stanza 11, *Ha XXXIII* of the *Gathas*, rendered by the Parsi scholar, S J Bulsara

"O Thou Most Bounteous Lord!
 Thou Wisest One!
 Thou Holy Law-abiding Spirit!
 Thou Life-promoting Righteousness!
 Here my prayer and cheer me
 By any the gifts of Thy Heavenly Blessing "

The word 'Israel' is composed of two words—(*Isr* righteousness) and (*El* omnipotent). *Israels* are therefore those who walk righteously in the Law of Omnipotent God. The following is a Hebrew prayer translated into English

"Hear, O Israel! the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. May it be Thy will O Lord our God and God of our fathers to cause us to walk in Thy law and cleave to Thy commandments and lead us not into sin, transgression temptation and contempt. Remove from us every evil inclination and cause us to adhere to the good. Oh, grant us grace, favour and mercy in Thy Sight and in the sight of all that behold us and bestow gracious favours on us. Blessed art Thou O Lord who bestoweth gracious favours on Thy people Israel. Amen!"

It will be seen from the above prayers of different faiths that the devotee seeks happiness of this world as well as of the other world through righteousness. The predominant note is happiness and that is the exclusive

property only of those who seek God in earnestness of feeling. Love and faith in God constitute the basement of the entire spiritual structure of man's happiness. Love is the magnet of the soul drawing men to undreamt-of heights. Does not St John say, 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light. Let us not move in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed in Truth. If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Love is thus the clear and open way to God so simple and so perfect that many fail to find it seeking instead some more elaborate road.'

Faith like that of Prahlad, who was persecuted by his father in a hundred ways but would not give in, or that hunter Kannappa who tore out his eyes to please the God Shiva, is a most wondrous thing. It is a most active force. It is the voice of the soul the solvent of all difficulties, the inner channel that takes you to the effulgent house of God. It teaches concentration and meditation.

Love of God and love of the whole creation—these are the cardinal teachings of all religions. Love is the very essence of the individual soul. The only motive for action is the love of God and this love of God we find beautifully expressed in the scriptural prayers of all religions. 'Eternal Truth postulates immeasurable Love.'

The *Sufis* believe in Universal Worship. They have an altar where they burn eight candles. The central candle which is higher than others, represents the Light of God. The second large candle is a symbol of the Spirit of Guidance—the messenger in all ages who, known or unknown to the world, has held aloft the Light of Truth through the darkness of human ignorance. The

other six candles represent the different religions of the world, *viz.*, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Zoroastrian the Hebrew, the Christian and the Islamic. The scriptures of the different religions are laid at the feet of the six candles. The taper of the Light of God is first lighted and then the rest and the following beautiful hymn is sung

'Praise be to Thee Most Supreme God,
Omnipotent Omnipresent All pervading
The Only Being

" " " "

Pour upon us Thy Love and Thy Light,
Give sustenance to our bodies hearts and souls,
Use us for the purpose that Thy Wisdom chooseth
And guide us on the path of Thine Own Goodness
Draw us closer to Thee every moment of our life
Until in us be reflected Thy Grace Thy Wisdom,
Thy Joy and Thy Peace
Amen!

Meditation is concentrated prayer. All religions lay stress on it though it must be admitted that nowhere is it so much emphasised as in the Hindu scriptures particularly in the *Upanishads*. There is no bliss in the finite things the Infinite alone is bliss'—is the teaching of the *Upanishads*. Meditation though difficult in the beginning becomes easy if the aspirant is steadfast and unflinching. It leads to God realization which alone is true bliss.

The process of achieving God consciousness through meditation is very beautifully described in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, as will be seen from the following metaphorical picture. Taking the great weapon the bow, mentioned in the *Upanishads* fix the arrow sharpened by

meditation Drawing it with the mind rapt in the Immutable, pierce my bow, that target, the Immutable. *Om* is the bow, the soul is the arrow and *Brahman* is called its target One must pierce it with concentrated mind and become like the arrow, one with it."

(*Mundaka*, II, II, 3-4)

Religion has to deal with two classes of people—the masses and the enlightened few Its object is to lead man, step by step, according to the measure of his intelligence and enlightenment to the mysteries of God The esoteric teachings in all religions are meant only for the advanced souls. The masses can understand only one thing, viz., the outward form of worship and this is enjoined in every religion In the Christian scriptures we have such phrases as "milk for babes", "meat for the strong" which only mean that the masses have to be taught in one way and the highly evolved in another

To a sincere devotee of God, He is everywhere It is not at all necessary that he should find Him in any special place But inspite of this obvious truth pilgrimages to holy places are enjoined in every religion, for prophets were great psychologists and they knew the working of the mass mind They devised the outward form of worship The Hindu pilgrim goes to Benares and Hardwar to offer his *pūjā* The son of Islam goes to Mecca and Madina If the hardships on the way are borne in a true spirit they are nourishment to the soul and the pilgrimages so undertaken out of impregnable belief and faith have a solemn value Muhammad was against worship of idols He destroyed several idols in Mecca, but being a student of psychology, he maintained the Temple built by Abraham, and called it *Ka'ba* and made it the centre of pilgrimage and worship He

knew that it was not necessary. But people required some outward form of worship and Muhammad thought it fit to devise this method as a preliminary to take them eventually to the inner sanctuary of the heart for the true understanding of God.

Buddha was a great reformer. He abolished the caste system of the Hindus and many of those customs and rituals which the priest craft had introduced in Hinduism. But an astute and a great thinker as he was, he knew that the unconquerable craving in man for some tangible form of worship had to be satisfied and he advised his followers when he died, to make the following four places as centres of religious gatherings (1) The place of his birth *Lumbiniana* (2) the place where he got his enlightenment *Buddhi Gaya* (3) the place where he commenced his work of mercy and of teaching the new religion—*Sarnat* in Benares and (4) the place where he passed into *I ara nirvana*.

Jerusalem is the centre of pilgrimage for the Hebrews.

The Christians hold in great veneration the places associated with Christ viz. Bethlehem where he was born Nazareth where he was brought up the river Jordan where he was baptised the sea of Galilee and the towns adjoining the sea where he preached his religion Jerusalem which was the chief centre of his ministry and Calvary where he was crucified.

The idea behind pilgrimages is to ennoble the mind to sanctify the heart to open the inner chamber to the beauty of God by recalling to memory the soul-stirring lives lived by prophets and saints. If pilgrimages create a true religious atmosphere they have a value and as such only they are welcome.

The essential part of a religion is its philosophy and in the fundamentals it will be noticed from the survey we have made of the teachings of the world religions that there is a conspicuous unanimity of ideas

All religions preach the same essential truths. In fact the prophets that came on earth had nothing new to say. They only repeated what their predecessors spoke and taught. We know the famous saying of Christ. I come not to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfil them. This is a clear indication that the prophets were God's messengers sent from time to time to awaken man from the stupor of sin to the path of righteousness. Confucius said. I only hand on. I cannot create new things.

Truth is Eternal. It is One. How can there be differences except in the matter of perception? As it is said in the *Upanishads*. Cows are of many different colours but the milk of all is of one colour white. So the proclaimers who proclaim the truth use many varying forms to put it in. But yet the truth enclosed in all is One.

Mrs Annie Besant after showing the common traits in the essential teachings of all religions says in her book *The Universal Text Book of Religion and Morals*. They all have one treasure the knowledge of God which is Eternal Life. They use many methods but all have one object the helping of man through purification to perfection. They have the essential truths in common but differ in many details and in relative stress laid on each.

Yes each religion lays stress on a particular thought. Hinduism particularly the *Vedantic* philosophy emphasises the recognition of God as the One Pervading Spirit.

throughout the Universe. This is the most vital teaching in the *Vedas*.

Zoroastrianism lays great emphasis on Righteousness. *Ahura Mazda* is *Vahō Mano*—the Holy Mind. Purity of mind, body and soul forms the essential teaching of this religion. It is no wonder that, small as the community of the Parsis is,—in fact numerically so insignificant that it is not even a drop in the bucket in comparison to the population of India,—it has contributed substantially to the moral, social, economic, industrial and political awakening of this country. It is a most long-lived community in India, which shows the purity and sanity of its way of living.

Buddhism puts emphasis upon perfection of character, for which purpose it has evolved a most scientific and detailed code of morality and ethics which deserves our highest approbation. Christ's teaching centres on love. "Love thy neighbour as thou lovest thyself," said Christ. It is a sublime thought. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him: That he who loveth God loveth his brother also."

(1. John, IV, 7, 11, 20 & 21.)

The fulcrum of Islamic teaching is brotherliness. This in essence is its greatest excellence. "Righteous is one who gives wealth for His love to kindred and orphans and the poor and the sons of the road and beggars and those in captivity." (*Koran*, II, 172.) One of the sayings of Muhammad the Prophet is. "No man is a

true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself

All religions speak of One Life One Consciousness One Human Brotherhood, One Plan for the achievement of human perfection and goal. There is no religion higher than Truth says the Theosophist. If this teaching is understood in all its bearings, it should form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood for Truth is One and Eternal. This teaching should at least make a Hindu a better Hindu a Moslem a better Moslem a Christian, a better Christian a Sikh a better Sikh a Jain a better Jain a Buddhist a better Buddhist a Parsi a better Parsi. In fact as we have shown every religion speaks of God as the pervading Spirit in the universe of His divine love and justice of the necessity of righteousness and selflessness as the means of ascending to that sublimity which is God. The voice of reason the voice of desire the voice of instinct the voice of nature the voice of logic and the voice of revelation—all tell us that the soul is immortal. Even in the savage bosom there is a longing a yearning a striving for the touch of God. Though we may not feel His hand in darkness though we may still grope and fumble and feel helpless we instinctively know that God is the Only Reality.

The discovery of electrons and protons has destroyed the atomic theory of matter and even Science is now realising the truth that Matter is only the outward expression or the physical manifestation of Spirit. This great discovery has turned the attention of scientific thinkers to the cause of creation as the Spirit that pervades the whole universe. The alliance between Science and Religion as regards the ultimate goal of life is therefore a

most enthralling event in human history and it must eventually lead to a complete revolution of thought in man's conduct with his brotherman, in all aspects of human existence,—economical, social, political and religious.

Science, Religion and Philosophy—the three compartments of human investigation and knowledge—are now agreed as regards the universality of the One Pervading Spirit that embraces the whole universe. God is the only Reality. This Universal Spirit manifests Himself in endless diverse manners. He is projecting Himself into infinite Time and Space, in infinite varieties and forms. God's power is patent and latent. He is visible and invisible. He appears and disappears. To be united with God is the aspiration of the scientist, the philosopher and the man of religion.

It is said that during the reign of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the lion of the Punjab, a live body of a *yogin* in deep trance was found by some soldiers, who were occupied in the work of digging up earth. Either out of the spirit of curiosity or brutality, one of them kicked the *yogin* in a most brutal manner and the latter was awakened from his deep trance with intense bodily pain. He died immediately but his dying words were, "Thou art That." The *yogin's* dying words correspond with the teaching of Christ, "The Father and I are one."

"All this is verily *Brahma*,"—*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*,—is the teaching of the *Vedas* and if this *mahavakya* is properly understood and followed, it should form the main arc in the superstructure of our universal religion.

"We are all parts of One Stupendous Whole
Whose body Nature is, and God the Soul."

Christ said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, this is the whole of the law and the prophets " The *Ashem Vohu* of the Parsi scripture says, "Happiness is that which gives happiness to others Ona who is righteous for the sake of righteousness is happy." And the *Gita* says, "After man's death, his only companion is righteousness "

And the Prophet Muhammad says

"Noblest religion this—that thou shouldst like,
For others what thou likest for thyself,
And feel the pain of others as thine own "

Buddha tried to give a universal turn to religion by re-instituting and re-propounding such a great truth as the "Conscience of Man " In fact, this Buddhist teaching forms the essential of all religions and it is ridiculous to consider that Buddha's teaching was only morality and nothing more According to Arnold, "Religion is Morality touched with Emotion " The voice of conscience must lead to God Ethics cannot but end in religion We must therefore look upon Buddha as a founder of Universal Religion The ideal of human unity can be fulfilled only through the vista of religion, and in no way through nationalism, which is circumscribed by geographical limits Take the case of Islam It has no colour bar, it has no frontiers The yearning of the heart for human unity can be fulfilled only when the people of the whole world are brought under one belief one faith, one mode of worship If God is One, if Life is One, if there is no separateness in universe, why should there be diversity of religions? As human consciousness awakens and the ties of humanity are strengthened, we hope we shall soon reach the day when all religions would be merged into a universal mode of worship

Even if the notion of Universal Religion be a distant echo, it should be enough for the present if the teachings common to all religions of the world are understood and the harmony of life, which is the greatest teaching of the Lord, is sought and maintained. Whether one be a Hindu or a Moslem, a Christian or a Jew, a Sikh or a Parsi, he should feel oneness with all; for the Lord, who guards us and loves us all, wishes us all to love one another. The divine urge in man is towards Unity of Life. Love for God, ONENESS WITH GOD is the be-all and end-all of Life. God is the deepest source of man's aspiration and inspiration. Even though we may continue in different faiths, the love of God is the cementing link, the golden hook that binds us all in One Great Brotherhood. God is the polar star of all our aspirations and achievements. "O God, the Truth, make me ever ONE with Thee in everlasting love!"

A PRAYER

O God, some look upon thee as the Father, the Lord of the universe, from whom has emanated all existence. Others look upon thee as the Divine Mother, the fountain of love and mercy, compassion and sympathy. Some hail thee, as the Supreme Masculine Principle, extra cosmic and separate from Nature. Others behold thee, as immanent and resident in Nature. But thou art to us, O God, both Father and Mother, the Giver of Law and Justice, the Fountain of Love and Compassion, all powerfull, all wise, all loving and gentle. *Thy spirit pervades everywhere.* Thou art smaller than the smallest atom in the universe. Thou art greater than the biggest sea and the sky. Thou art beyond human comprehension and expression. Thou art beyond time and space. Thou art self-

born, eternal, infinite, the seed and source of infinite forms and forces.

O God, thou art Sat Chit Ananda. It is the mad craving of this heart to become One with thee, O Lord.

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